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APA-TECH # 41

The 555 Times # 41

The Amateur Press Association by and for the
members of General Technics (more or less)

Roxanne

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NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Well, it's been one year for me as GTB, and seven years for the apa. Somehow it doesn't seem that long, but numbers don't lie. This job is a lot of grief for not a lot of reward, but I guess I'll keep it for awhile yet.

As this is an anniversary issue, dues has been taken out of your accounts this month - which is probably why so many people owe money --- PLEASE keep an eye on your account, and send me money before your account goes negative. The amount listed each issue is your account before shipping of that issue. Postage has typically been just over a dollar per issue. And if I'm doing your duplicating that's another \$ 1.50 per page (1 x .05 x 30 = 1.50). For those of you who have kept a steady trickle of money flowing, thanks - it's really appreciated.

That's it for now - don't forget that Greg is editing next issue so send your zines (lots of 'em - and make them nice and long!) to him. We'll see some of you at Confederation - and the rest of you right here!

GTB

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LETTER FROM EASTON

Guy Consolmagno
643 Parsons St
Easton, PA 18042

Life goes on here in the hot, muggy northeast...it certainly wasn't so warm back in Africa! But then, I was living at 6000 feet elevation. Still, it's nice to see summer returning, the change of the seasons is one of those things you take for granted until you have to live without it. Let's see, news first... as of August 1 I will have a new address, 200 High St, Easton, and a new phone number (which I don't recall). I'm becoming faculty resident and adviser to the McKelvy Honors Program, which means moving into the faculty apartment in McKelvy House, a turn of the century mansion designed by Sanford White (the architect who designed the Boston Public Library and several pseudo-renaissance buildings in NYC) which sits on a cliff overlooking the Delaware River. It's a lovely place, only a few blocks from campus. The really interesting part will be living and dealing with the students, 22 "intellectually curious" types who have to be nominated by faculty to take part in the program. I've met them briefly...some of them are foreign students (who tend to be really bright--see below); some seem like they'd fit in at MIT (ye Gods!) in being aggressively bright and innocent of social graces; and some seem like ordinary folks who must have gotten in by mistake! I have taken an instant liking to all of them...this should be an interesting year. Quite a contrast to the year just ended, where I spent all too much time rattling around a house by myself, with only a cat to keep me sane.

Speaking of cats, I now have two of them. My friend Anne came to visit for a week, last week...and while here, we of course had to go out to buy some milk (a code phrase for, visit the local dairy farm that sells fabulous ice cream). While eating our sundaes outside, a sleek, supple, and self-confident black cat curled herself up in Anne's lap...turns out, the cat had been abandoned at the farm a few months previously, and the dairy owners were delighted that someone might want to take it off their hands. They only have half a dozen cats already. Anne had visions of taking her back to New Hampshire, but the other residents of her home up there (including seven cats already!) had other ideas, so now I'm the caretaker of Revelation, so named because of the few white hairs under her chin, standing out like a bright idea...it also adds to the illusion that she's wearing clerical garb, so she's called "Rev" for short. It's so odd to see this strange black animal, out of the corner of my eye, inhabiting my home. I'm sure I'll get used to her. I'm not so sure Annie will, however. (Annie is the cat I brought back from Africa. Anne is the friend I left behind when I went off to Africa. the similarity in names is, of course, pure coincidence.)

Speaking of having two of things, I'm now custodian of two three and a half inch telescopes. I got myself a Celestron C-90 to take to Africa, which has served me well...but now I also have custody of the College's Questar telescope. We set the two up last night to make a side-by-side comparison. Of course, anyone who's ever read National Geographic or Scienterrific American and seen the Questar ads has always wanted one...especially since they're so expensive! It costs about four times what my C-90 goes for. So, you ask, what's the verdict? It's got its good and bad points. The optics are clearly superior, no question...but not so much so that it makes my C-90 look bad. It's also got a built-in Barlow so you can change powers with the flip of a switch, which is quite nice. However, I do not like the finderscope system. The C-90 has a plain old finderscope, a small

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tube that you point towards whatever it is you're trying to find. It's idiotproof, especially once you've got the crosshairs properly aligned. By contrast the Questar has a somewhat sophisticated set of mirrors and levers--you look through the main eyepiece, flip a lever, and you are seeing not through the main telescope but through a mirror underneath the telescope. The advantage, on paper, is that you never have to remove your eye from the eyepiece, just flip levers. The disadvantage is that, in real life, I can't find a damn thing in the finderscope because I'm not looking in the same direction that the telescope is pointing.

Mostly, my impression is that the Questar is very expensive because it is full of little extravagant features that most amateurs have long since learned to live without. I mean, how often is the seeing good enough to take advantage of diffraction-limited optics?

Speaking of telescopes, this month we're putting in an order for 6 C-6 Newtonians and a C-14 for the college. We are going to be teaching the college's "moons for goons" course, complete with a lab using the telescopes. It used to be taught by a fellow in math (we used to have a department of Math and Astronomy, like many small eastern colleges do) who has just retired. In our physics department, we have 2 astronomers (counting me) which is as many as many astronomy departments. Lyle Hoffman does radio astronomy observing of extragalactic objects; I do theoretical models of solar system stuff. He teaches the "cosmology and big bang" course, while I get to play optical astronomer. I find myself in a common dilemma here...I know enough good amateur astronomers to know that I am not one myself, and I have done just enough observational astronomy (Greg Ruffa could tell stories!) to know how much I don't know...and on the basis of these qualifications, I am the local "observer". The department doesn't want to hear me be modest... they want me to be the expert. So, in short order, I'd damned well better be an expert. I feel like Capt. Pausert from the Witches of Karres. May I be as successful!

Soapbox Time: Education in America...

I read the various comments of the past few APA's about what's wrong with the educational system in the US, and I have to say I agree with a lot of it. As a college teacher I have to deal with the illiterates who come out of our high schools--kids who can't express themselves in writing; kids who can't read a graph or handle trigonometry; kids who just want a good job and a good party and who aren't turned on by the excitement of learning.

There's a freshman here at Lafayette who came from Kenya, and he's way beyond any American at this school (as, in fact, are the majority of the foreign students here. The top student in my physics class this term is a woman from Sri Lanka, and number 2 is a fellow from India.) This Kenyan is taking a junior-level

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solid-state physics course and cruising through it, because he's seen so much more math and physics in high school. Given the Kenyan high school syllabus, which follows the British system, by the time he got here he'd had six years of high school physics! Just seeing him, it's really easy to conclude that their system is a hell of a lot better than ours.

It isn't.

First off, the comparison isn't fair. This Kenyan, like most of the foreign students in the US, is the cream of the crop in Kenya. He went to the absolutely best high school in his country (probably in all of East Africa), and he must be one of the top 100 students out of half-a-million kids his age in Kenya. In America he'd easily have gone to MIT instead of Lafayette.

Second, because he came here after his A-level exams, this means he's two years older than his American counterparts and has had two extra years of high school. He ought to be taking junior-level courses!

And finally, there's a whole lot he can't do, which any American-educated student can.

Most people who (quite accurately) point out the shortcomings of American education tend to look at the European or Japanese model to see how things ought to be done. Well, having taught in their system (both to poor up-country kids and elite city kids, both at high school and University level) and having taught in the US--high school in a small town in the rural midwest, and college level at Harvard, MIT, and now Lafayette--my overall impression is, first, our average students are far better than the "elite" University students in Africa, when it comes to the preparation they have for University work; and second, (which is saying the same thing) our schools do a far better job than theirs at teaching the sort of things what can't be measured by multiple guess tests. They have learned more facts, but we've learned what to do with the facts.

Let me describe an example. During Peace Corps training in the US, I taught a "current events" class as a student teacher for a few weeks in a small rural high school in Illinois. My kids were the ones who were too "slow" to take history--the football players, the overweight, unpopular, dull-witted girls, the ones who had no plans or expectations except to become farmers, raise kids, join the Elks, and drink beer for the rest of their lives. Their classwork consisted of reading the newspaper each morning; I had to lead a "discussion" for 45 minutes and test them once a week to see if they'd been awake.

Well, we were no threat to Nightline or David Letterman. But we did have discussions. Every kid in that class knew how to form an opinion, take a stand, argue a point. They knew the difference between facts, opinions, and wishes. They knew logic when they saw it. They could follow the flow of an argument. They could understand the point of view of someone they disagreed with. They knew how to think for themselves.

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By contrast, such skills were unheard of in Kenya for the most part... among members of Parliament! Adults have opinions which they pontificate at endless length, never listening to anyone else. High school kids were beaten if they attempted to express an opinion (outside of structured "debates"). Self-expression and logic is not what they need to know to Pass The Exam, the national O-level and A-level exams which forever determine the fate of each youngster.

(True story: a high school teacher saw some students of his beating a lizard to death. "Why?" he asked. "It is a snake!" they said. "Look," said the teacher, "does a snake have legs?" "No..." "Does this have legs?" "Yes..." "Is this a snake?" "Yes!")

Imagine if all your 8 years of grade school boiled down to one test... if you were in the top 25% you got to go on to high school, otherwise it's a life of manual labor. In high school it's 4 more years geared to one test...if you fail, or get a division 4 pass, you'll never be allowed to study further or have any sort of job. And the tests are designed to fail the students, because too many division 1 passes would flood the A level schools. Again at A levels, there's one test which is the sole criterion for getting you into the University...only 2000 places for half a million kids each year! So all classes are geared to memorize facts instead of understanding them (yes, just like Feynman describes in his book).

What's worse, the kids are forced to choose a specialty by form 3 (age 15 or so)...from then on, you may study only your subject. I'd have been lost--I didn't decide to go into science until my sophomore year in college.

Yes, I have met well-rounded, well educated, broadly-interested people who were educated in Europe. But I've also met British scientists whose ignorance of literature, art, or history was embarrassing. A maths graduate of Oxford asked me in 1976, "what is this Bicentennial in America all about? Is that when people first settled there?" Their system tends to discourage inventiveness, daring, curiosity, risk-taking, self-expression, experimentation.

Yes, there's lots wrong with the students I teach today. But none of them ever come to me, like they did in Africa, and say, "oh, sir, the homework problem you have given us is impossible. We have looked through every book in the library and cannot find the answer anywhere!"

End soapbox

Mailing Comments: Many years ago I submitted a paper to Icarus, and when the referee's comments came back they were about the list of references, the acknowledgments, and the abstract...no comment on the paper itself. So now you know how scientists read scientific papers. First, they check the reference list to see if they've been quoted (and if so, they page through the paper to find out if they've been quoted correctly). Then they check to see if they're mentioned in the acknowledgments. Finally, they read the abstract to see if they're likely to be interested in, or understand, the bulk of the paper. The point is, we're all egotists who love to read what other people think of us; and I know when the APA arrives, I usually page through looking to see if anyone had anything to say about my submission!

So, it's only fair that I force myself to find specific things to talk about. It's tough, since I only know 2 or 3 GTer's in the flesh, and I haven't seen any of you since a bunch of you drove from Chicago to Mt Carroll, Illinois, while I was there during Peace Corps training, nearly 3 years ago...now that I've moved to Greg's part of the world, he's moved to San Diego.

Rod: I loved your Marching Morons debunking. All the facts were familiar, but I'd never seen them put together that way to draw that conclusion. I'm convinced!

There's a fellow I talked to recently who grew up in a black part of Plainfield, NJ (he's white). All through grade school he tested out with an IQ of about 90, just like all of his classmates. In high school, his family moved to affluent, all-white Scotch Plains. His IQ (as tested) doubled in 4 years. He's now a professor of mathematics here at Lafayette.

(I think this is the third or fourth time this APA that I've tried Ronnie Reagan's trick of "proving" some assertion with anecdotal evidence. How very unscientific of me...but it makes for more interesting reading, I guess.)

Barry G: Yes, the comet was pretty dull (not bad with binoculars in Kenya, I'm told). And Kohoutek was a dud, too. As a result there are a lot of people who think comets/astronomy is overhyped. Arrrrgh! I know better....one day, back when I was a grad student in Arizona, I was busy making dinner when my roommate, Bob Howell, fellow grad student, came rushing into the apartment. "Guy, come out here! You've got to see this!" (As if it were about to disappear.) "I was riding home on my bike and looking up at the stars" (a common and dangerous practice among grad students) "and nearly fell off my bike when I saw Vega..." He took me out and showed me. The summer triangle had become a quadrilateral...there was a star in Lyra that had gone nova, and for about a week it was first magnitude. It is scary to see a star where all your experience tells you there isn't supposed to be one! (But you have to know the sky in order to be scared like that.)

But even better than that...was getting up at 4 am one morning (every morning for about a week) so that I could see Comet West. You didn't need binoculars, or a finder chart, or some dude on TV's expensive book. It was there, bigger than life, looking just like every photograph of a comet I'd ever seen. Only scarier.

The trouble is, people will only look up at the sky when someone tells

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them to. Venus is visible as an evening star, for about a third of the time--odds are one in three that it'll be there if you happen to look--and yet people get surprised by it all the time and call it a UFO. Arrgh!

The origin of the moon paper you refer to is a theory that is absolutely awful, for several reasons. It's unlikely (but there's only one moon, so it only had to happen once!); it's damned difficult to quantify anything about it, so it's difficult to prove or disprove; it's not clear that it solves half the problems associated with where the moon came from. (Sample problems with the Moon: 1. it has a weird orbit. If you see how its orbit is evolving today, and extrapolate backwards, always dangerous, you find that this orbit could not have existed for more than 3 billion years. But the Moon rocks are $4\frac{1}{2}$ billion years old, and neither the Earth nor the Moon show any signs of stress related to capturing the moon from elsewhere. 2. The moon's chemical composition is all wrong. The rocks are rich in iron oxide, but the overall density of the moon shows that in bulk, the moon is quite depleted in iron. The iron is always oxide, never metal; but there's no water, or free oxygen, on the moon and never has been. And finally, the moon is very poor in Sodium and Potassium, even though the rocks are plagioclases (which on Earth are rich in those elements). Nobody's even attempted to explain that problem)

Getting back to the theory--it is so vague that it's been called the "Schmoo" theory, since like the character in L.L.'l Abner, it'll give you anything you want. The person who called it that was Al Cameron, the first inventor of the theory! Yes, it's an awful theory...it just happens to be better than any other theory at the moment.

Alice B.: I haven't read "So you want to be a Wizard", only the sequel, which I thought was wonderful. I love kids books...maybe it's because a writer of a good kid's book can't get away with sloppy plotting, boring dialogue, or sex-as-a-device-to-sustain-interest-when all-else-fails. (Though, nowadays, that's not true anymore, a development which I don't particularly like). CS Lewis commented about how hard it was to write kids books, without romance or sex to fall back on. I notice that, instead, the Narnia books all have lavish, sensual descriptions of...food!

Donna P.: I'm not a fan, and I don't even read the stuff anymore. (And judging from the local bookstore in the mall, nobody's writing it anymore either.) What appeals to me about GT is that it is such a diverse group; the only thing we seem to have in common is that we enjoy playing with technology, either concretely or, in my case, with the abstract ideas on which it's founded. And the key thing is the fun. As a group, we'll do anything that seems like our idea of fun, without organization or prodding.

Marty F.: I read the Eudeamonic Pie, and agree with your comments...speaking of good books, have you seen Feynman's book on QED? Written supposedly for the layman...if positrons are really electrons travelling backwards in time, how could we exploit this to build a time machine?

"Dayton is a Great Place to Live, But You Wouldn't Want to Visit There."

A contribution to ApaTech #41 by Roxanne Meida Shields, 4309 Drowfield Drive, Trotwood, Ohio 45426 (513) 837-4165 Copyright 1985 by the same. All rights reserved.

*** Hamfest Report ***

Introduction

The 1986 Hamfest-Berserker held here the weekend of April 25-27 went over extremely well. It was well attended, although a few people we had expected couldn't make it at the last minute. Apparently everyone who did come had a good time (at least they said they did), and no one was overly annoyed about anything.

Chapter One: Dayton Has a Hamfest!

The Hamfest itself was overwhelming. It is incredible to think that that many people and that much electronic hardware could move in overnight right next door. I was quite content to walk most places during the weekend, including over to the Hamfest, in order to avoid the traffic.

This has to be one of the few places where true capitalism still exists. You could walk by a given booth three times and see three different prices posted for the same item. I expect that someone so inclined could plot a graph showing how the prices rose and fell according to the time of day and prices being charged at adjoining booths. For instance, Mike Bentley acquired a modem for about \$90, but by the time other people got there to get one too, the price had risen to \$110. Of course, they sold out anyway.

The day was beautiful, the temperature in the eighties, with just enough breeze to avoid outright sweltering. Alice's #10 and #15 sun-screens saw extensive use.

I could only take about six hours of this, so around 1:00 or so, Alice and I headed out to a science fiction/comic/used bookstore I had discovered downtown. I used restraint and only bought two new books, but Alice, as usual, needed a grocery bag. Admittedly, much of this (ten volumes) was a birthday gift for Phil, which he should have by now so I don't feel guilty mentioning it.

We also went on a tour of some of Dayton's "bad neighborhoods"--places where a slightly used Victorian mansion (with, say, four bedrooms, palatial kitchen, living, dining rooms, etc.) goes for around \$50,000. Since we are both in the preliminary stages of house hunting, Alice and I had a great time. I wanted her to hang around and go look at Open houses on Sunday, but she had to be back to Fermilab to work at midnight. Oh, well....

Dinner on Saturday consisted of hamburgers, hot dogs, chili, and tossed and potato salad. Since Scott prepared everything beforehand,

there wasn't much work to do but get everything out and cook the meat. We wisely invested in styrofoam plates and plastic silverware which made clean-up equally easy.

An unusual thing happened with the timing of dinner. We hadn't planned a specific time to eat--we know the group too well for that. About 3:30 Saturday afternoon everyone was back from the Hamfest and just sitting around talking. About 4:00 the conversation gradually turned from "What I got at the Hamfest" to "Where's my next meal coming from?" We aiders and abettors noticed and acted upon this, so that by the time "Let's get something to eat" came up (about 15 minutes later) the hamburgers were on the grill. Just as it looked like the ravenous mob was about to start a run to McDonald's, there were the hot dogs and hamburgers, all brown on the outside and juicy on the inside and ready to fix with your favorite toppings. Amazing.

Chapter Two: In Search Of... Comet Halley (and other things that go bump in the night)

While thinking of things that GT people might like to do, I came up with the idea of looking for Halley's Comet, for people who hadn't seen it yet. So I bounced the idea off Bill Higgins and it came back positive, so about an hour before sunset six of us set out in two cars in search of someplace far enough from Dayton to be able to see it. We had it easier than other comet-searchers I had heard of, as the comet was at least 30 degrees above the horizon and the temperature was a balmy 70+.

We set up shop just as the sun was setting near the intersection of two presumably little used country roads about two miles south of the spot on the map known as Arcanum. There was plenty of time to kill, so Bill got out his ukulele and we joined in a few choruses of "Home, home on LaGrange," et al. Two or three cars did stop to ask if we were broken down, but we explained that we were merely waiting for dark so we could look for the comet, and they went on.

It finally got dark. We got out the telescope and binoculars and began looking at other objects in the sky, such as Venus, and testing Guy Wicker's knowledge of constellations. He was well versed in the northern ones, but less so in those to the south (the obvious results of a childhood spent in Houghton). Bill H. had a star chart which proved invaluable in locating the comet.

At that point, the local sheriff's deputy cruised up, turning on his flashers and creating a worse visual distraction than Dayton ever could. Quickly assessing the fastest route to getting rid of him, I hurried over to his door.

Mere instants before he tried to ask me the same thing, I queried, "Is there a problem, sir?" which totally confused him.

He muttered something into his radio (probably cancelling the call for an ambulance), and then turned to me.

"We got a report that you were broken down out here."

"No, we're just waiting for dark. We're looking for the comet, and this seemed like as good a place as any, since we're away from the lights of Dayton, and there aren't any houses nearby to disturb, and we

should get a good view from here."

His eyes widened. I guess this must have been the first time this particular excuse was used on him. (Although it seems to me that comet watching really should have replaced the submarine races in teenage popularity this season.)

"Well," he said. "Well." There was a long pause.

"Should we go somewhere else?" I asked.

"No," he said, "You're ok here. You should put on your flashers, or something, so that other cars won't run into you. You would be held responsible, since you are parked on the roadway. But I don't see any problem." Then, "I know, I'll give you an alert signal you can put out later, when it gets really dark." He got out of the car, went to the back and opened the trunk.

I shot a glance around at the assemblage of GT people, and it was very difficult to prevent hysterical laughter at the thought of the police freely presenting us with a pyrotechnic device--in this case a highway flare, which he handed to me.

"There, that should do it. Well, turn some lights on and have a good evening." He got back into the car and summarily departed.

"No one is ever going to believe this," I muttered. I stared at the flare, not yet really accepting myself what had happened.

Guy came up. "What did he do?" he asked. He spotted the flare, recognizing an old friend immediately. "Did he give you a flare?" he asked incredulously. I guess the idea of policemen giving out such fireworks to such as us amazed him as much as me.

Well, we all had a good laugh over that. As I said then, even if we don't find the comet, the trip had been worth it just for the story value. We turned on the parking lights, but not the flashers, and that's how we got the 1986 Dayton Hamfest/Comet Halley Search Memorial Flare.

By then it was dark and sky searching began in earnest. We took turns with the binoculars and the telescope. The binoculars were much better for scanning the sky. We followed Bill's description of the way to find the comet according to the sky chart, first finding Corvus, then moving two Corvus-widths to the west, find a bright star and look just for the comet at around eleven o'clock. I looked for three bright stars in a line across the sky (part of the constellation Crater), drew an imaginary W and looked for the comet near the bottom of the right v.

Amid the mutters of my fellow amateur astronomers about the probable dimness and lack of comet shape to be expected, a fuzzy ball the size of any three stars came into view. "Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute," said I. Finally, "I think I found it" escaped my lips. My heart soared in the hope that this was it.

"Uh, Bill, can I accept a large fuzzy ball just to the northeast of a bright star as the comet? If I can, then I got it!" (I was sure this was it. It had to be it! It was in exactly the right place according to the star chart...) I began hopping up and down with excitement. (Okay, so what if I'm 26 going on ten? Who cares? This was The Big One!)

Bill was less enthusiastic. "Let me have the binoculars." I gave them to him. "Now where were you looking?" I explained the W theory of where to look, and how far over, etc. He looked. Then he got excited. (He had seen it before and knew what he was looking for.) He affirmed my suspicion.

We had found the comet!

Okay, so everyone was right and it was just a cosmic smudge in the midst of the brilliant night sky, but I have seen it now and I won't have to lie to my grandchildren.

Back on the home front, things were also going smoothly. Republic had found and delivered John Hall's guitar sometime in the afternoon, and he was leading everyone in the standard song repertoire. Dave Taylor and Marilyn Mix had arrived, with their younger child, who fell asleep early on our waterbed. People were all through the house, singing, talking, consuming munchies and generally having a good time. We kept it up into the wee hours of the morning, until I turned the clocks ahead for Daylight Savings Time. When 12:30 suddenly became 1:30, and people wanted to be back at the Hamfest at 6:00, it seemed time to call it a night.

Chapter Three: Jeff Gets a Phone Call

At 3:42 a.m. EDT, Nancy Kress called. I answered the phone after two rings, coming out of a sound sleep. I had no idea who might be calling at that hour of the morning/night. In fact, I cannot recall what her first words were, but mumbled something to the effect that she must have the wrong number. She realized immediately that I was still 80% asleep and clearly asked if Jeff Duntemann was there, as she had this number for him. At this point I realized who she was talking about.

"Yes, he's here, but he's sleeping in the backyard," I said. Jeff had decided that, since it was such a nice night, he would sleep outside under the stars.

"Well, he said to wake him up when I called," she said.

I considered the possible consequences of a) awakening him in the middle of the night; and b) not awakening him when Nancy called. I vaguely remembered an earlier phone call, and his excitement that she, a close friend, was up for a Nebula for best short story.

"Ok, I'll go get him." Think, think. "By the way, did you win?"

Long pause. "Yes!" ("Should I tell her...? Oh, what the hell..." came clearly through the thought waves during the pause.)

"Congratulations!!" I exclaimed in my best quietly-enthusiastic-while-half-asleep-at-three-in-the-morning voice. "I may be awhile," I said, more sanely.

"That's ok," she said.

I quickly moved through the house to the front door, then ran around to the backyard.

"Jeff, Jeff, Jeff," I loudly whispered. "Wake up, Jeff, you have a phone call."

Jeff sat bolt upright. His eyes widened, staring at me, but obviously he had no idea who I might be. (His wife? No. His mother? Too tall.) He looked around, seeking clues from the surroundings, and equally obviously had no idea where in the Universe he was.

"Jeff," I said more loudly (and more cautiously), "Nancy's on the phone. She wants to talk to you."

"Who...?" He shook his head, trying to wake up. "What?"

Deal with stark reality when they're this confused, my psychology instructor said. In careful, measured tones, I said, "Nancy Kress is on the phone. She won the Nebula. She wants to talk to you."

Enlightenment came to his eyes. Movement came to his body. He struggled out of the sleeping bag and moved toward the front of the house. I followed. "Where is the phone?" he asked as we went back in.

"In my bedroom, at the back." I moved him as quickly and quietly in the right direction as I could. (No need to wake up ten other people who were only going to get four hours sleep as it was.)

He found the phone. "Hello...Hi Nancy...Yeah...I was sleeping in the backyard..." Long pause as she said something and he struggled to maintain consciousness. "Well, congratulations..." He mumbled some more sentences that I didn't catch. "Yeah, you're right. Well, I call you later..." He hung up the phone.

I thought he was going to go back to sleep on the spot, but I was wrong. He moved out of the bedroom, heading back to his sleeping bag, making noises about being sorry for waking us up in the middle of the night.

"Hey, well," I said. "It's not very often that people wake me up to tell me they won the Nebula."

NOTE: If anyone here ever wins a Nebula, or a Hugo, or an Oscar, and can't think of anyone to call, my phone number is (513) 837-4165.

Chapter Four: Off we go, into the wild blue yonder...

Sunday morning we all went to the Air Force Museum, which is located about fifteen miles from here at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. I found it fascinating, but then I like airplanes (and hang gliders, space ships and kites [well, to watch anyway--I'm not sure anymore whether I would actually ride any of them]).

The most interesting parts for me were the History of Aviation display inside and the modern planes on display outside, especially the F-15 and the Wright Brothers' airplane. The extensive displays on the uses of aircraft in the various wars was the least entertaining, and I passed through it quickly.

It would be easy to spend a week or two going there every day. After I got the rough ideas down, I would be able to start dissecting and assimilating the data. One idea so assimilated has come down to me this way: The airplanes on display were mostly WWII era planes which had plaques below tracing their history from the plant, through the battles, and right up to when they were flown to Wright-Pat to go on display. 1. Hardy aircraft, those planes of WWII. In the WWII section was a display on the "Rosie-the-Riveters" building many of those same planes. 3. Startling conclusion: Most of those high-quality, "workhorse" planes of WWII were really built by women, from start to finish! I'm certain there are many other amazing discoveries waiting within the walls.

The "penny racer" (Scott says it's a "Coin Vortex") in the lobby attracted the most attention, as a troop of Boy Scouts fought elbow-to-elbow with full-grown Techies to see whose coins would fall into the hole in the center first, and how many pennies could go at once, and how long

it would take various coins to submit to gravity. At least, that's what I hope they were doing. They could have simply been mesmerized by the simplicity of a truly effective donation jar. (It has been suggested that we acquire one for the living room for next year.)

Following the successful museum trip, we briefly terrorized a Wendy's for lunch before the group dissolved to wend its way homeward, wherever home may be. We squeezed five people into the Nova to take John Hall to the airport (which wasn't nearly as uncomfortable as I thought it would be. I don't want to ride 500 miles like that, but I would have easily six years ago). Only Jeff Duntemann and Marty Franz came back to the house for the Dead Dog Party and Clean-up Fiesta.

A word about the clean-up--Techies are getting neater, and leaving less behind. The entire clean-up, including loading and running the dishwasher and vacuuming the floor, took less than one hour. To date we have found the following items:

DX Brings Danger by Walker A. Tompkins

A "Baby Slugger" cap

A "Mendelson Electronic Surplus" cap

I'm pretty sure the "Baby Slugger" belongs to the Powells. Please let me know if the other items are yours, and how (or if) you want to get them back.

As frequently happens, the Dead Dog was extremely enjoyable as Marty ("I have to leave early"), Jeff, Scott and I sat around on the freshly vacuumed living room floor and discussed whatever seemed appropriate. Jeff gave me some particularly helpful advice in regards to developing fictional characters, and my writing career will be positively affected by it.

All in all, it was a great weekend, and should have lasted at least another day.

This is the official list of Who Was Here:

Overnight guests:

Alice Bentley

Mike Bentley

Jeff Duntemann

Marty Franz

John Hall

Bill Higgins

Bill Leininger

Atsushi Miyashito

Sam Paris

Tom Snoblen

Guy Wicker

Temporary guests:

Larry Brader

Tom

Dave Powell

Suzanne Powell

Marlena Powell (baby)

Dave Taylor

Marilyn Mix

Devon Taylor (baby)

Since this year's trial went so well, we have decided that if we're still here next year (which we probably will be), we are going to do it again. Since the number of guests worked out so well, we will be aiming for the same number again. To avoid inequality, or any other injustice, the people who were here are invited back. Only the Trembleys are also

invited, as they were supposed to be our only guests originally, but couldn't come at the last minute. No one else is currently invited. Should some of the Overnight Guests decide not to come for whatever reason, their space could be filled at *our discretion* by another guest. We may also expand the guest list slightly (for instance, it seemed strange to have Bill without Barry, so he will probably be added), but only on a person by person basis.

THE END

On the Saturday after the Hamfest, I went over to Dave Taylor's house for a meeting on next year's Millenicon. I have attended other ConCom meetings before and was fairly well prepared for being drafted into running something. I was right...

The remaining openings were Secretary/Treasurer and Chief Gopher. Dave looked pointedly at myself and the guy next to me (the only people not active in and doing the same thing as last year) and asked who wanted to run the Gopher Hole. The other guy looked around and tried to hide under his seat, so I said, "But I wanted to play with the money, er, um." This caused general laughter, why I'm not sure, but the other guy spoke up and said he would run the Gopher Hole. Dave then asked if I was serious about being Treasurer. "Sure," said I. "Balancing checkbooks is what I do for a living. Why not in my spare time too?" The other people felt that although I appeared over-qualified, they would let me have ~~the position~~ the position. We coerced someone else into doing the secretary things, like taking notes and writing letters.

Upon further discussion with the ConCom, this may have been a hasty decision. But I should have a good time, and near as I can tell, the only complaints most people have ever had with the convention treasurer relate to either not getting paid on time or allowing the account to overdraw. Hopefully I will have neither of these problems.

I have gotten a new job since my ranting of last issue, which I started on April 1. I am working as an accounting clerk in a mortgage company. (Okay, so it's not particle physics. Hey, well, someone in this organization has to have a real job...) When I started there, it was North Central Financial Corp., but our new owners (as of January 1, we belong to the Shawmut Bank of Boston) have decided to give us a new name and we will soon become Shawmut Mortgage Co., effective June 1. I expect it will take awhile before people really start calling us that and not North Central.

I work with the branch offices. Specifically, I balance the checking account they write their closing checks to title companies from. I make sure there's enough money in the account to cover all the checks. This can be a challenge since they sometimes wait several days before they tell me that they have written a check.

When I started the job, no one had been really doing it for about two weeks, and there was an incredible backlog. The account was not balanced, and they had avoided overdrafts merely by dumping a lot more money into it than it would possibly need. I have worked a lot of overtime getting it cleaned up and posted to the computer, the proceeds of which I have so far deposited in savings like a good little person.

(Hey, I want to be on the receiving end of one of these checks someday, i.e. when we buy a house as soon as possible [probably not until late 1987 though].) As of this date (May 15), the account still won't balance with the bank, but I am no longer working overtime. My co-workers and myself decided we had had enough, and that if there is really that much work to be done, they should hire some more people. We will see how it goes.

Last Thursday they announced that the firm will be moving into a new office building in the suburbs. Unfortunately the suburb they're moving to is on the extreme southern edge of the Metro Dayton area, and about 20 miles from where we live. Hopefully we will be able to afford another new car by the time the company moves and I have to start driving to work instead of taking the bus. If not, a future issue will again detail what my new job is like.

WARNING: If you don't want to read about my new niece, skip this section.

My sister, Lori, finally had her baby on March 20. She was due on February 25. In recompense, she had about the shortest labor in history. She got up to go to work as usual at 6:00. At 6:30 her water broke, and she called to tell them she wouldn't be in at 7:00. She fixed breakfast for herself and my dad, who had just gotten up. They ate. Around 7:30 she felt the first contraction and they decided to go to the hospital. They weren't hurrying, since labor usually goes 10 hours or so. They got there around 9:00, and Victoria Robin "Vicky" Castle arrived at 10:26 A.S.T. (This was all taking place in Puerto Rico, where my sister and her husband are stationed in the Navy.)

My dad was very excited because they let him be in the delivery room and help. This was the first baby he ever saw get born in person, and it also happened to be his first grandchild. Tie Grandpa to the ground with a string so he doesn't float away...

Vicky weighed 10 lbs. flat at birth, and was 21" long. Her shoulders are quite a bit wider than her head, and that made getting born even more of a challenge. I guess her head emerged two or three minutes before they managed to get the rest of her. I say sign her up for football as a lineman, or teach her to skate and let her play defense for the Canadiens.

I got to see her the weekend of April 5. Lori, Dad and baby came home on the 25th, so Vicky had her first plane ride at the ripe old age of five days. She fell asleep during take-off, and proceeded to sleep the whole way to the stopover in Atlanta, where she ate, got changed, and fell asleep again.

You have never seen a baby that is such a dedicated sleeper. Nothing bothers her. She had a terrible diaper rash that came from sleeping for hours with a wet diaper. She doesn't even wake up during a bowel movement (although anyone in the surrounding area does. It's hard to believe such loud noises come from such a young baby). But the most effective demonstration of her sleeping ability came when we took her to church to be baptized.

Vicky was due to be baptized after the service, and she was awake when we got to the church. But she fell asleep as we went into the

sanctuary and slept on Lori's shoulder through the whole service, even when Lori stood and sat down again during the various songs, gospels, etc. (It's a Lutheran church.) Okay, so I've been known to fall asleep in church once or twice, too. But then the organ played a deafening solo after the service, and we practically had to shout to tell the other church members who the baby was. Vicky just slept on. The only time she so much as winced was during the baptism itself, when the pastor poured water on her bare head. She moved slightly to the right, and made a face. But she didn't wake up! It makes you wonder what sort of dreams babies have...

So now I'm an aunt other than by marriage, and it's great. Lori and I went out and I bought all sorts of baby girl clothes. It was better than when I played with dolls because I could buy whatever I wanted without Mom saying no, and the kid is young enough that she doesn't care what she's wearing. Just wait till I have kids of my own...(but don't hold your breath).

PICNIC REPORT

Over the weekend of May 16-18 we went up to West Chicago for the Higgins/Bentley/Johnson AMAZING Picnic, which lived up to its billing. Over 70 people showed up for a picnic on a day which threatened to rain tornadoes over most of Illinois, including the Chicago area.

Yes, it was crowded. Several times I went into different rooms just looking for a place that was quiet. On the other hand, I got to see a lot of people that I hadn't seen in literally years--since I quit going to cons in 1982, to be specific. And some since before that. It made for some interesting times.

Amy Schaefer was a good example. She was walking by, I wasn't doing anything in particular at the time, so I said, "Hi, Amy! So what are you up to these days?"

She looked at me, and looked at me, and then stated firmly, "I don't know you."

"Ah, c'mon Amy," said I, disbelievingly.

"Where do I know you from?"

"Chicago, about four years ago." No recognition. "You know, Thursday nights." Still no recognition. "Amy, I lived with Phil for almost a year!" Finally a light began to dawn.

"Naw." She laughed. "Naw, you couldn't be."

"You remember, Roxanne, formerly Meida, now Shields."

"Roxanne!" Her eyes got wide. "You've changed! Your hair is dark! You have glasses! I didn't recognize you!"

No kidding.

So we dodged raindrops and ate tons of whatever everyone brought (veggies, grapes, apples, potato and tossed salad, cake, hamburgers and hot dogs by the dozens), blew bubbles of various sizes (one of Bonnie Jones' mega-bubbles actually floated out of the backyard, across the tennis court, over the river, and over the highway before it finally met an end on a power line), played with Frisbees and talked, talked, talked.

I had long conversations with just lots of people. Most notable was a talk with Phil, which was our first really substantive conversation since I left New York in April 1982. This means we finally got beyond the "So how's it going?" "Just fine, thanks" stage. I'm glad, because it looks like we will be able to remain friends, a rarity for myself and my former boyfriends.

I was surprised how many people I knew, and how many more I didn't. Mike and Alice had invited people from work (who were amazed that Scott and I would drive six hours each way for a picnic). And yet, I could think of another dozen or so it would have been nice to have show up. Greg Ruffa, for instance, who did the next best thing and came by telephone.

I had a great time, all in all. But this experience made me even more resolved to hold down the number of people at the Hamfest next year.

Before the picnic, Alice took Scott and me over to Fermilab for the standard tour. That was fascinating. Since she works there, she could take us in the control room and down into the tunnels. The pre-accelerator looks the most like an atomic accelerator should look--gleaming stainless steel in bulbous rounds, like something from a bad 1930's Frankenstein movie. The ring itself looked like some kid's oversized model train that had permanently stalled, what with its six-foot-long segments stretching off into infinity in both directions.

It was enough to make me think about looking up some articles on sub-atomic physics so I can better understand just what it is they do there. If you have never been, you should go. It's incredible.

We also went by the Bentley's new house in Aurora. It is a rather old house actually, on a double lot. It has a lot of nice touches, like pine trees in the yard and a detached double garage in back. It is on a corner lot so the entire yard is not given over to driveway either. We of course did not get to go inside since the current residents will be there until the end of July. But it looks like a very nice house.

Mailing Comments on ApaTech #40

Cover--Did this really happen? Or is this just Steve's deranged imagination at work as usual?

555 Times--Three cheers for the bi-monthly deadline!

Transporter Topics--We had the same, or at least related, tornadoes here in Ohio. They did quite a bit of damage about thirty miles from here, but we were not affected, except to worry and get rained on, and we realized that not only do we not have a basement, but we don't even know anyone who does...//I was going to be going to Marcon, but now we have decided to go to Chicago instead. Maybe I'll get to Inconjunction. //I agree with you about Symphony. It has so many bugs built into it, it is surprising it doesn't get the Frisbee treatment more often. I don't use it myself at work, but in trying to help the other computer-near-illiterates who do, I know well the frustration of which you speak.

Ravings from the Tropics--The omission of a street name--Bessmer, which runs north from Greencroft and forms a right angle with Drowfield--caused much confusion in those attempting to use Mike Bentley's version of this map to get to our house for the berserker-sort-of. Please insert it in all future versions.//Otherwise, RAEBNC.

Stardust Memories--If your description of finding the comet is any indication, you truly missed your calling as an author. That is probably the single best piece of writing I have seen in the apa in a long time. Wow. //Okay, so the polar bear is indeed a bear. I still don't want one in my sleeping bag, or anywhere else that's easily accessible to my anatomy.//Re Bridge of Birds: Alice found a copy for me while she was in town. I read it in two days--you're both right, it's incredibly good fantasy. It is extremely difficult to imagine all of that coming forth from one brain, during one lifetime. And they say there's more! I'm sure that eventually Barry Hughart will be close to Tolkien and McCaffrey in the Legions-of-Loyal Readers area.

A Finite Primate at a Finite Typewriter--Reverting to comment on a previous discussion of right/left brain phenomena: Last week I went to a new eye doctor to get a new prescription, as I had noticed things were getting blurry. In the course of my examination, the doctor became interested that I am right handed, but my left eye is dramatically better than my right. He did a few tests of reflexes, and determined that I "should have been" left handed, but that my mother had "trained" me to the right. I know that I could write with either hand until about seventh grade, when taking notes became required, and a choice had to be made. But where does this leave me? Does this explain why I can write fairly clever prose and still do math? Or why I can never decide whether to be a writer or an accountant? Interesting thoughts...//Great bubbles at the picnic. You have yet another talent.

Faster Than the Speed of Light--Hmm...if I get going on comments this may become a book instead of a zine. Congratulations on the new house, I like it. (Of course, you already know this.) Let me know if you want help moving or painting or any of that stuff. It has now been proven that it is possible for us to go to Chicago for the weekend and survive unscathed. Plus the month of August looks pretty open at this point.

Letter From Easton--It sounds like life in Africa is like life in general--the more it changes, the more it stays the same.//I have been around several colleges, ranging from the very big (Michigan and Illinois) through the mid-size (Michigan Tech) to the very small (Suomi College). I have to agree with you. The quality of the teaching was generally about the same at each, but at Suomi the instructors actually cared whether you passed or not, while at Tech they were generally indifferent, and I knew many at U of M who felt the instructors were more out to get you to fail than to pass. Someday when I have kids of college age, I will probably insist that they go to a smaller school for at least the first two years, even if it means more financial difficulty, because they are more likely to be challenged and more likely to succeed at the same time.

Alive and Plastered in Kalamazoo--I'm sure the visitors to IsherCon this year will see the new bathroom as a Godsend, but we know where it really came from... Now if we could work out a second shower and a hot water heater...

Incorrect Thoughts--See our story of the comet above. So can we help it if we were born 76 years too late? Better a fuzzy blob than nothing!

I think this is plenty for one zine. (Does twelve pages help the thickness, Donna? Or am I just too long-winded?) I will stop for this issue and see you all whenever or in the next issue.

Roxanne

Insignificant Other

an APA-TECH zine from
Barry Gehm
129 Burcham #10
East Lansing, MI 48823

Science stumbles onward.

I'm afraid it will have to be a short one this time, friends. Science has caught up with me and most of the past month has been spent preparing a grant application to the National Institutes of Health to get money for the project I've been working on for the past two years. So it has been a busy month, the first part spent in a rush of experiments to provide all the supporting data possible and the latter part in the throes of writing and preparing figures. One of the latter, with the accompanying caption, is shown on the next page (other side of this one, if I decide to spring for double-sided Xerox again). The illo was prepared by a graphic artist, although he essentially copied my original. What does it mean? If you want to know in detail, ask me sometime when you've got a free hour. As a short response, it shows that the enzyme I work with responds differently to calcium ions depending on how salty the solution it's in is. This is not exactly startling, but it wasn't obvious a priori, either, and is pretty important from a technical point of view. Anyway, that's where much of the time has gone.

A weekend at Club Mud.

I did manage to get a weekend off to attend the annual West Chicago Spring Picnic hosted by Bill Higgins, Mike & Alice Bentley and Todd & Mary Lynn Johnson. The Picnic was quite a success, with about 70 people all told putting in an appearance. Most of the Chicago fans I know, and quite a few I didn't, were there. (I wasn't the only alien: Donna and Tullio Proni came along with me, and Scott and Roxanne Shields came in from Dayton.) We only got rained on a little bit, and I managed to play enough Frisbee and catch to be thoroughly stiff the next day. This year I was selected to make the Keith Thorne Memorial Muck Wade after a Frisbee landed in the pond. (Keith isn't dead. That's just the way you smell when your feet are covered with mud and goose shit.)

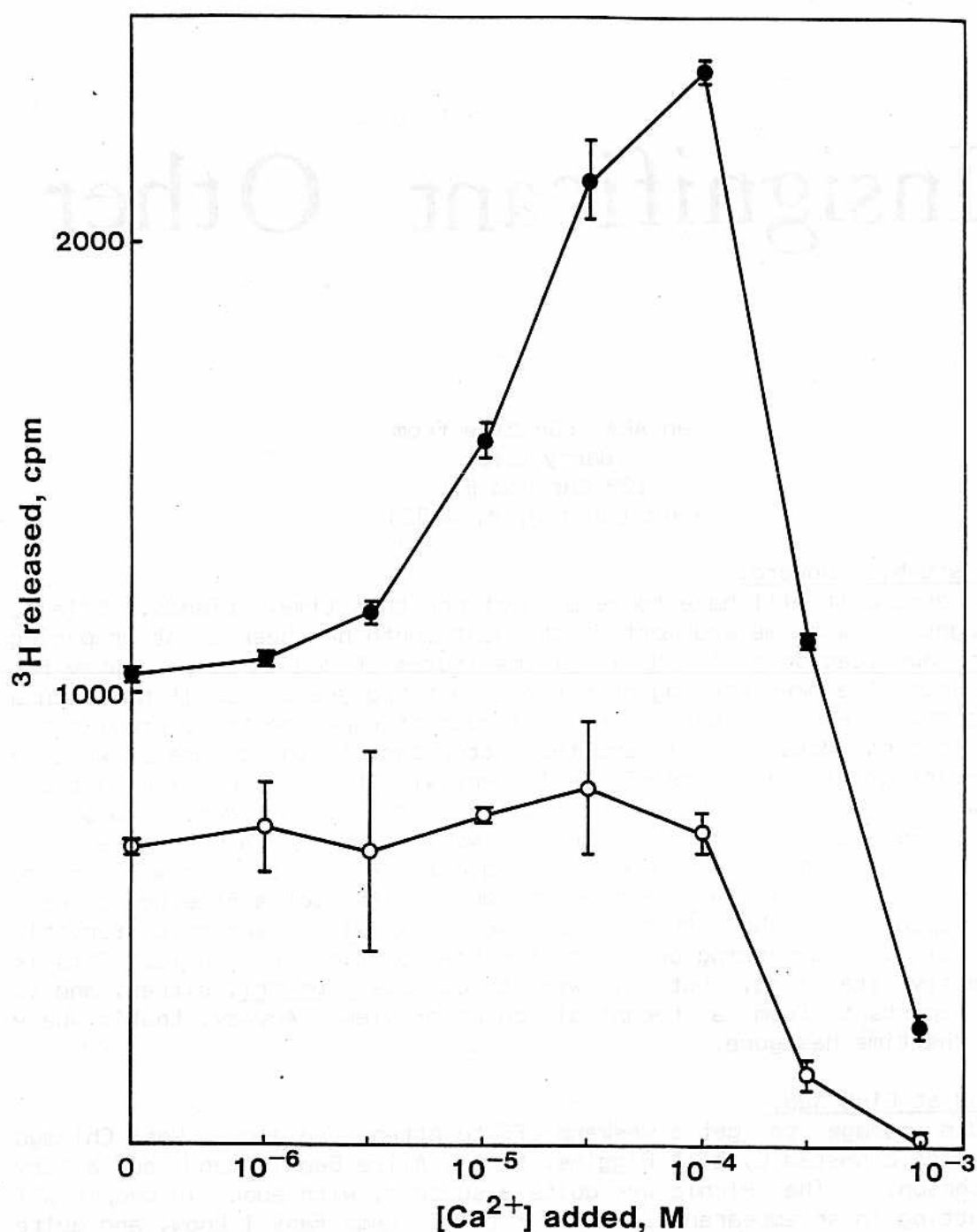


Figure 12: Effect of KCl on Ca^{2+} Response of Soluble ROS PLC.

Low- Ca^{2+} , low EDTA isotonic supernatant was prepared and concentrated as described in Additional Methods. 50 μl aliquots (1.2 mg Lowry protein /ml) were assayed for PIP_2 PLC activity as described in Additional Methods, in Tris-HEPES buffer containing the indicated concentration of CaCl_2 , and either 15 mM (open circles) or 165 mM (filled circles) KCl. Error bars indicate the standard errors of duplicate assays. No-enzyme blanks are subtracted from all values.

Who put the "con" in Windycon?

Before I pass on to the mailing comments, I have to make good on a threat. Last year I was recruited to be on a Windycon panel. As is usual in such cases, I was promised a free membership. The nature of the panel was such that it required a certain amount of research to prepare for it; it wasn't just sitting up at a table and schmoozing with some BNFs, so I felt like I was doing something to earn the membership. When I got to the con, I was a little annoyed to discover that nobody had provided Registration with a list of panel participants, and that I had to pay the at-the-door registration fee. I was assured that I would be getting a refund shortly after the con. It's now pushing eight months since the con and I am still waiting, despite many calls, letters and personal contacts with various members of the concom. As far as I can tell none of the panelists has gotten paid and nobody on the concom feels any urgency about the matter. There's not really much I can do about the matter. \$20 is a significant amount of money to me (on some days it's more than my life savings) -but it's hardly worth trying to take someone in another state to small claims court over. In my last letter (April) I applied the only pressure I could that would have any substance, to wit, I stated that I would tell my fannish friends, especially those in Chicago (several of whom read this apa) about this and warn them that if they are asked to be on a panel, to gopher, etc., at the next Windycon, they had better make sure they get compensated up front. Don't get Windyconned. You have been warned.

Mailing Comments.

Cover: Funny cartoon, Steve, but who is that Charles Laughton look-alike in the background?

555 Times: Just wanted you to know I read it.

Rod "Transporter" Smith: Your "Joy of High Tech" articles seem like a good example of the knowledge-dissemination role for GT that Greg Ruffa and others have been promoting lately. From the one you included I would have surmised you have been reading Stephen Jay Gould even had you not mentioned him twice in your zine. Suggestion regarding your articles: it never hurts to refer your reader to some of your sources in case he wants to read more. /// re yr ct Bonnie: although Science 80+n occasionally runs articles by Gould, Natural History has a monthly column by him (source of most of the essays in his collections).

Roxanne "Ravings" Shields: I don't know if there is a representative political outlook for techies. The conversation I had with Tullio on the drive to Chicago sure convinced me there is a considerable range inside GT.) /// The development of a technocracy seems quite possible, bu I don't know if it will produce the kind of stratification you contemplate. Nothing assures that the child of two engineers will have a similar talent, or that the child of two techopeasants will not, (unless technical education were restricted to the children of the technocrats), so there is still the opportunity for social mobility that is not present when class distinctions are based on something more heritable, like race or possessions.

Bonnie "Finite" Jones: I should say "Thanks for the map," since I'm likely the only member of the apa who'll get much use from it. /// re yr ct
Eric: Did you go to the topless beaches in Nice? Can I check you for tan lines?

Alice "Faster" Bentley: Nice to see the old Gravity's Rainbow password put to use. /// Your rotating shift schedule will kill you. It's been scientifically shown that people who work rotating shifts always die eventually.

Guy "Easton" Consolmagno: Your travels and travails make interesting reading, but you make it too easy for the other apa members to say, "I haven't done anything interesting, so I don't have anything to write" (to be read in a whiny, nasal voice). Now it's time to settle down to a nice boring existence and still write interesting zines. That'll show us.

Donna "Plastered" Proni: I agree with what you said in your letter to Pyro, having made some similar points myself. Jamie unfortunately does not have room to print the full text of every letter, a fair amount of mine was omitted too, but it was mostly natter.

Marty "Incorrect" Franz: Blasphemy! The Good Old Days of GT were amazing! We were giants in those days. We built ~~starships~~ motorized chairs.! We built ~~robots~~ motorized trashcans. We toppled ~~governments~~ George Ewing's house. Okay, it wasn't Periclean Athens. We did do a lot more that we do these days. /// "Perhaps another Passing of the False Snout is at hand"? Could I persuade you to explain that? /// It's easy to see which one of us was determined to enjoy Halley no matter what. Nevertheless I'd be happy to help you lynch the Star Hustler on the grounds of general ickiness. /// re yr ct me: As I wrote you outside these pages, I quite agree that taking the time to write a detailed response to my review was classy, although Palmer hasn't deigned to respond to my reply to his response, but a reluctance to get involved in a protracted discussion is understandable. Writing letters doesn't put bread on the chickens, or something like that. My impression is that most writers do not reply at such length, at least. I did get a postcard from Asimov last year when I pointed out an error in one of his F&SF science columns. (Somebody's got to keep an eye on these guys.) Anyone interested will have a chance to read Palmer's response to my review, and my reply, in the next Pyro.

Everyone: Nice to see some multi-page contributions but only eight zines (plus cover) from a membership roster of 29 people? (Actually 28 people and 1 two-person "entity.") Come on, folks, stop coasting! "Waxworks wasn't meant to be looked at for nothing, you know."

LAZY DAYS OF SUMMER

A zine for Apa-Tech # 41, written by Donna Proni, at 530 W. Walnut, Kalamzoo, MI, 49007. (616) 342-4967

Egoboo first.

Transporter Topics - Rod - re yr ct Guy Wicker: my word processor is Apple Writer II. I think you just get accustomed to advantages and/or disadvantages with everything around you. You get used to working around barriers until you've forgotten they were ever there.

Ravings from the "Tropics" - Roxanne - The Hamfest sounds like a lot of fun - maybe next year (if we have any money).//re yr ct Guy Wicker: even though we have fireworks in the same place at the same time every year, I'm not really worried about the police. After all, it isn't like we have an hour long display at three AM in the middle of October. I expect them to appreciate the time and day that this occurs. After all, we're respectable and respected citizens (aren't we?). Anyway, the reason that there were so many police there this year had nothing to do with us - there was a fight at a party just down the street from us, and they were there to break it up - except that it was already broken up by the time they got there, so they stopped by to see us instead.

Stardust Memories - Barry - Wow! That two people seeing the same thing can come away with such different feelings is amazing. Your description made me want to go out and SEE - unfortunately, I'd already heard the other version from so many people I let the chance go. My loss.

A Finite Primate at a Finite Typewriter - Bonnie - re yr ct Sam: maybe if the immigrants were required to learn English within a certain amount of time it would be better then saying that they need to know it before being let in. Some of the people I know who have the strongest feelings on this subject are my in-laws - when they came here, they had to learn English to survive. There weren't any bilingual courses to help Tullio through his first years here. It was

sink or swim, and they swam! Why should others have courses catered to them?//Does anyone know if English has ever legally been declared our official language?

Faster Than the Speed of Light - Alice - We also enjoyed Bridge of Birds when we read it, but I wouldn't say that that it always kept up the believability (a certain air traveling device left me a little unsure). But I would certainly recommend it to those of you who haven't read it yet.

Letter from Easton - Guy - Maybe now that you're so much closer to all of us (relatively speaking) we'll get to meet you. If you're ever in Kalamazoo, drop in, especially if it happens to be around New Year's. Will you be making it to any conventions we might be at?

Incorrect Thoughts - Marty - Not only cynical, but erroneous came to mind when I read your zine. The times were good, and a lot did get done. Yes, we should worry about real projects, but I feel that it's easier to get people working together if they feel they belong together - if they belong to an organization. So tell me, how have you helped the "people in our midst writing books, building blimps, and doing all kinds of real techie things..."?

Well, not much new here. We're starting to enter the pre-Worldcon frenzy. We hope to have enough time to work on a "crystal" (plexiglas) castle to put into the art show this year. But then we always have grandiose plans. Maybe this year we'll actually follow through. What we need, and what Tullio really wants is to find a summer (or anytime) apprentice - if you know anyone who's interested let us know.

I guess I'll wrap this one up. A little short but I at least wanted to drop in to say hello.

Guy Wicker
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 Southfield, Mi 48076
 (313) 647-1820

I'm convinced that Energy Conversion Devices is the strangest place in this country one can work at. Every day I meet new people with peculiar areas of expertise. There are over 100 projects here, with about 500 employees. No-one knows anything about business, administration, management, or communication. Researchers in specific areas often have no idea whether their work is applicable to anything else. It's all related to amorphous semiconductors, though. One fun thing I like to do is point two experts at each other and suggest that their efforts could be combined to make something that's actually useful. That is usually very exciting to them, since little that is done here has ever been practical. How many other companies have a room temperature superconductor research group?

I've become obsessed with work lately. The only other activities I engage in are eating, sleeping and, of course, going to science fiction conventions. I'm flying to Japan for the second time tomorrow to present the results of the 3D VLSI memory project I've been working on. We managed to get a wafer scale fabrication line running with about 30 people. Unfortunately this didn't leave much time to do anything with it. I fear the days of this project are numbered. That's a shame. I'm working with the foremost expert on laser crystallization of amorphous materials and the inventors of the Di-FET transistor and hope that combining these people will lead to a transistor with performance nearly equal to that in crystalline semiconductors but that is applicable to 3-dimensional structures. I'm also researching ultra-high speed switching materials that could be combined with this technology to make a pretty mean memory system. All that's needed is a couple of years and about 10 million dollars. I don't think the Japanese will hand it over, however. The existing contract has gotten distorted due to an emphasis on product development when the basic research still has a long way to go. Investors like to give you money for product development but hate to pay for basic research. What this means for my job is that I might be working on flat panel color displays in the near future.

Tokyo is a great place to visit on an expense account. Japanese businessmen work 8 hours a day and then go out to dinner to negotiate and discuss more work. Dinner bills are typically \$300 per person. Some restaurants will charge \$100 just to sit down. The food is extremely exotic. One night I had blowfish. The nerve toxin in it can kill in seconds. Only a few liscensed chefs can prepare it properly so it isn't deadly. The best blowfish is served with some toxin left in it, but this is illegal. You have to know the chef and bribe him appropriately. You may think this is crazy, but it tastes pretty good. Something like liquid nitrogen. On this trip, a friend of mine is going to take me to where people go when they're spending their own money. There are 75000 restaurants and 44000 bars and nightclubs in Tokyo. They can get very specialized, kind of like the Safe House in Milwaukee. There are 26 million people in the local area so things get pretty crowded at night.

I have to get back to making 3D memories work now. 31 hours to flight time!

MAILING COMMENT:

Barry - Stardust Memories gave me enough inspiration to go out with a few others at Roxanne's sort-of-berzerker for the remote chance that we might see the comet. We did! A fuzzy dot. But I didn't miss seeing it. Thanks.

CRUMBCRUNCHERS, INC.

Dave Powell
P.O. Box 98
Ripley, OH 45167

This contribution to APA-TECH is written by Crumbcruncher #2, Susannah, and hindered by Crumbcruncher #3, Marlene Rachel.

As this is Dave's first submission to APA-TECH after a hiatus of several years, we'd better introduce ourselves. To wit: Dave, Susannah and Marlene Rachel (currently in training for the Terrible Twos). We live in the thriving metropolis (about 2000 people) of Ripley, Ohio, which recently enjoyed a bit of fame by appearing on the national news; a tornado struck here on March 10, and among other things, flattened two of the four tobacco warehouses.

Yes, tobacco is big business around here. Though Ohio doesn't seem like tobacco country, Ripley is in southern Ohio, right on the Ohio River, and it is a major crop. Of course, not as much tobacco is raised in this area as in, say, the Carolinas, but nobody can ignore it, regardless of their personal feelings about tobacco. Dave can expound for hours about how tobacco is raised and harvested and cured, so I'll let him do that in a future APA-TECH if he so desires.

Before the Civil War, Ripley was a real hotbed of abolitionists, or as some slaveowners apparently referred to it, "that abolitionist hellhole." The reminders of that time are still close, especially as John Rankin, a very outspoken abolitionist, lived here. His house, in fact, is now a state memorial, and truths and legends about the Underground Railroad and escaping slaves are rampant.

Also back in the 19th century, this was wine-making country. From what I read, the hillsides around here were terraced and covered with vines. Many of the wine-makers were German immigrants who settled here - dozens of gravestones in the old cemetery have German inscriptions. But a fungus blight came along and wiped out the vines - this was before the Civil War. Today, of course, resistant strains have been developed and some people in this area are growing grapes again.

Well, I'm sure you didn't want to read a travelogue, but I thought I'd mention a bit about the place we live. On to more important things! You may have noticed (and been puzzled by) a single sheet of writer's guidelines for a magazine called STARWIND in the last APA-TECH. Or you may remember this magazine from the days when it was an Ohio State student publication. Though you probably thought STARWIND folded long ago, it's actually in a state of semi-existence, as Dave and I have revived it, though we haven't been able to publish an issue yet! A major stumbling block here is a serious lack of nonfiction. Though I won't go into the magazine's philosophy here, suffice it to say that we want to combine fiction with nonfiction, and we are eager to see stuff from any of you who've written something you think we might be interested in.

Dave, Marlene and I "attended" the Dayton Hamfest, and enjoyed the chance to see several of you. I say "attended" because we were worn out after an hour in that hot sun, wandering from vendor to vendor! In the case of events like this, we've definitely decided that less is better than more, that we should take in just as much as we like, and stop before we really get tired. We enjoy the day much more if we do this (and Marlene doesn't get so cranky, because she sometimes even has a chance to take a nap!). Thank you, Roxanne and Scott, for your hospitality!

Another event we took in in the recent past was Marcon - again, we didn't "do" it seriously - only attended the panels, etc. we wanted to and took breaks when we got bored or tired. We talked to people about the magazine (though I studiously avoided an author who's probably still ticked at me for rejecting a story of his!) and visited the con suite to complete a collection of helium-filled balloons for Marlene. (She loved them, and guarded them jealously even after they lost all their air.) We were pleasantly surprised to see quite a few families with children and to find out that there was baby-sitting available. Though most of the kids seemed to be grade-school age, we did run across one baby who was four weeks old.

While at Roxanne's, Dave and I had the Teddy Ruxpin references that appeared in #40 explained to us. Though I've never actually seen one of these toys in the flesh, I recall reading in TIME that the manufacturers have had a lot of malfunctioning bears returned to them. Not only had tapes gotten snarled up, but little kids had been trying to feed them. I could have told them that! Marlene offers food to all her toys. She had one of these battery-operated dogs that barks and walks, and had stuffed its mouth, which opened and closed realistically, with bits of cookie and cracker. Fortunately, this didn't hurt the dog. Teddy Ruxpins, apparently, aren't so lucky.

Also while at Roxanne's, I was asked if I were being "just a mommy." Being a mommy is a very challenging job, I've discovered, and nobody can be "just a mommy," since it's a full-time 24-hour-a-day occupation that requires all sorts of patience, tact, common-sense. And though it's got its downs, it's got its incredible ups too.

Besides mommying, though, I try to put in at least several hours a week on the magazine, reading submissions, writing rejection letters, and sometimes drawing up contracts to purchase stories, too. I also play the organ at the Methodist Church for Sunday services - after playing this 80-year old instrument for almost a year, I've become a real lover of the pipe organ (though pedaling is still a big problem for me). I've had the opportunity to really explore the music of Bach, Handel and their contemporaries that was written specifically for the pipe organ.

I see that the end of the page is approaching, so I'll end here. Next ish, I imagine you'll hear from Crumbcruncher #1. Coming up - the mysteries of electricity generation explained, desktop publishing explored, movie and software reviews - who knows?! (I sure don't!!!)

Steve's IRIALTO-BIJOU

610 Luella Court
Kalamazoo, MI 49001

NOW PLAYING: "A Little Bit About Me": I'm 34 years old and after noodling around college in Kalamazoo for a couple of years, I decided to move here. I ran across a dittoed announcement on the college bulletin board for the 'Kalamazoo Science Fiction Society', thereby meeting the friendly folks at Isher and fandom, in that order. I work at a printing firm running one of the 'Big Rigs', printing the forms that are filled in by computers. I collect movies (old classics as well as SF films) I like rock of the '50's, jazz of the '30's & '40's and old Warner Brothers Cartoons, as any of you attending an Ishercon will know. And now on to the rest of our show...

HORROR MOVIE DEPT.: I recently ran across the "religious" literature enclosed with this APA, equating Satanism with SF, D&D, Star Wars, and UFOs. Pretty frightening stuff, if it's true. And if it isn't, it's still frightening that people will believe this stuff. This may not provoke controversy (we may all agree on this one) but it should get some interesting comments. Oh well, see you in Hell.

MOVIE REVIEW: "Short Circuit" wasn't all that bad. It had computers and lasers doing things they couldn't possibly do (again) but I think its *charm* made up for that. It was a lot like "WarGames" (another John Badham film) in the way it started out with something you could pretty much believe and led into the fantasy *gradually*. And here I said I would commit deadly violence on myself if I ever saw another film with a cute robot... [Though I might consider *going out* with a cute robot!]

COMMENTS: Alice Bentley - Welcome! Your first sentence in "Faster than the speed of light" is exactly how I feel. Do all beginning APA writers feel this way? Since you've been in other APAs, you're not *really* a beginner, and you may have a head start on me. Although I've peeked at many an APA, when it comes down to actually putting fingers on keyboard and typing something, it can be so *difficult*! [Though as I edit this, I find more and more to say. Or less and less that I want to throw out.] Megathanx for the "Sharkout" book. It was fun reading. Did they have these kind of books when I was a kid, was I just looking in the wrong places, or was I born too early?

SECOND MOVIE REVIEW: "Space Camp". I just saw this the other night at a sneak preview, and I have returned to hating cute robots. I understand the producers problem, though. They wanted to do a film in which a bunch of kids at Space Camp accidentally get launched in a real Shuttle, and they *couldn't* do a number of things. They couldn't make it due to human error and make NASA look like fools. ("OOPS! I just leaned on the launch button!") They couldn't make it due to a computer/mechanical malfunction. NASA wants the astronauts (and the general

public) to have faith in thier technology.[Especially now, though I understand the film was finished before the Shuttle Disaster] And so they introduce Plot Device #37, the cute, hyper-intelligent, emotional, highly literal robot to do its own tampering, making it incredibly difficult to believe all that follows. And it's a shame, because this is the only film (besides The Right Stuff) that actually makes me feel as if I'd want to go into space. 2001 was too unemotional (the actors were, at any rate) and Star Wars was pure fantasy. There were a couple of moments in "Space Camp" that had that old Gosh Wow sense of wonder without any special effects flash&dazzle and that's what I liked about it.

Well, it's already one day past the deadline for this and I've put in enough "cheater/filler" to make any of my future zines look comparatively skimpy. Maybe by next time I'll have thought of some more Mailing Comments.(???)

ALWAYS LEAVE 'EM LAUGHING DEPT: Definition of 'Spearmint': What them science guys do to find out stuff.



COLLECT CALL OF CTHULHU

JACK VAN IMPE

Is "Christian America"

fast giving itself over

to demon power?

Dear Friend,

I'm not trying to startle you with sensationalism. I simply feel compelled to sound an alarm about what's happening to our country today -- the horrifying, headlong rush of multiplied millions of people into the hellish bondage of demonic deception.

You've probably heard the horror stories of satanic worship rituals. Observers say they include blasphemous chants; the drinking of evil potions made from alcohol, human blood, and urine; a voluptuous, nude woman stretched upon the altar; and a black-robed priest leading a semi-hysterical congregation in prayers to the devil.

Perhaps you thought these reports were exaggerated -- that this kind of evil couldn't go on in the twentieth century...at least not in the United States.

But it does!

And not just in the Sodom-like major cities...or in remote mountain communities...or in coastal areas overrun by people from foreign countries. Satanism, with its evil practices, is sweeping across this continent from Maine to California -- from Canada to Mexico.

Recently a major television network news program investigated the shocking increase of devil worship in the United States. They reported that satanic literature is available almost everywhere, and that there are now so many "churches" devoted to devil worship they are impossible to count.

The network reporter interviewed people who had been present during satanic rituals that CLIMAXED IN HUMAN SACRIFICE! Because the victim's body was burned afterwards, there was no evidence left of the grisly crime.

Law-enforcement officers, when asked for comment, speculated that perhaps there was a link between these demonic rituals and some of the cases of teenagers and children disappearing from their homes across the nation.

Yes, these are the extreme cases of Satan's power at work. But perhaps even more frightening is the ever-spreading, pervasive influence of the devil's power in virtually every neighborhood in our nation today.

Almost every newspaper and magazine in America has an astrology column, and millions of people -- even some Christians -- read their horoscope every day.

JACK VAN IMPE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Box J, Royal Oak, Michigan 48068 • Box 1717, Postal Station A, Windsor, Ontario, Canada N9A 6Y1

Ouija boards are still given to children as toys, along with other Satan-inspired games like Dungeons and Dragons, which have incited its youthful players to commit violence, rape, murder and suicide.

How many 24-hour-a-day rock-and-roll radio stations are there in your city? They broadcast the devil's message of sin and rebellion non-stop to grade-school children, teenagers, adults -- whoever will listen. Some of the "music" produced by rock-and-roll groups is so vile the album covers now carry warning labels!

Many of the most popular American movies promote demonic activities and package satanism to appear amusing or appealing. For example, "Star Wars" and its successors are almost classic examples of pure witchcraft (one of our TV guests, Dave Hunt, interpreted the satanist symbology of those films).

Are you concerned, as I am, about the increasing influence of the devil's dark kingdom in our country?

Do you know how to recognize the signs of satanism and to identify demonic manifestations?

Would you be prepared to confront the devil and defeat him, using the Word of God and your spiritual power, through prayer, as a believer?

God help us all to stop playing church and prepare ourselves as Christian soldiers to do battle against Satan's dark kingdom...and be victorious in Jesus' name.

I agree with the stirring words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 13:11,12 -- "...now it is high time to awaken out of sleep...The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

To help you be aware of Satan's subtle but deadly tactics and to know how to overcome his evil works, I have prepared a special collection of helpful materials on "Satanism and Devil Worship." This package includes an informative cassette tape and two books.

One side of the cassette includes four of Rexella's TV interviews with outstanding Christian leaders -- two with Dave Hunt, an authority on the occult; one with Rabi Maharaj, a former Hindu guru; and one with Johanna Michaelsen, who was so involved in the occult that she became the personal assistant to a psychic surgeon in Mexico for 14 months and witnessed many incredible psychic phenomena.

Johanna's book The Beautiful Side of Evil is included in this offer. It is one of the most powerful exposes of the devil's deadly deception I've ever read. This book reveals how some apparent miracles are actually demonic, and provides solid biblical guidance for believers. You won't be able to put this book down until you've read it through... and you'll refer back to it often.

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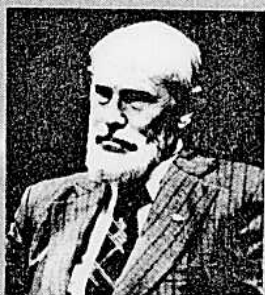
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DAVE HUNT



The world is being prepared for the Antichrist. We initiated an entire generation into the sorcerers' world—now we're being fed the sorcerers' philosophy from the top down. Schools teach children to look for the source of wisdom within themselves. Movies like "Star Wars" present pure witchcraft. U.F.O.'s are demonic, occult manifestations...preparing the world.

**JOHANNA
MICHAELSEN**



Remember there is a beautiful side of evil—deceptive, subtle, adorned with all manner of spiritual refinements, but no less from the pit of hell than that which is blatantly demonic.

**RABI
MAHARAJ**



Working with dropouts who had been hooked on drugs, I was most astonished to discover that many of them had exactly the same experiences through their drugs that I had as a Hindu through my meditation practices. I came to the conclusion that the source must be the same, namely demonic.

Satanism and Devil Worship

TRANSPORTER
TOPICS

Rodford E. Smith
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Frankfort, KY 40601

Number 36

Greetings and felicitations! This is coming in a little later than usual for me because I have had to learn how to use the Textcraft word processor I have with my AMIGA. Yes, I did go and buy one, along with a memory expansion, an outboard disk drive and a printer. I have copies of several programs from a friend, mostly public domain stuff, which I believe will do me untill I can afford to buy exactly the software I want. There are at least three companies coming out with advanced word processors soon, and one of those will most likely be my first software purchase. In the meantime how does this look?

Aside from my new computer things have been busy around here. Especially at work. I have been to one class on the System 36 and am going to another on travel modeling with PCs this coming week (the last in May). I have also been told that the project I have been working on for the past eight years is being downgraded because they can't afford to do the surveys to keep the data base up to date. Since the last survey they did was also the first and we have been struggling along fairly well for nearly twenty years with the existing data this came as something of a surprise. Oh, well, my new work will be a change and the old will still be continued in my copious free time.

I wasn't able to make Marcon this year. I had my con membership and hotel reservation all set, and two people who wanted to ride with me. Then, the week before the con, I discovered that I was supposed to be in a computer class all that next week. I canceled my reservation and sold my membership. The class was over at 4:00 or 4:30 each day and by the time I stopped to pick up my riders we wouldn't be getting into Columbus untill eight or nine at night. Anyway, I went to class the next week and found out that it was only four days! On the other hand, Friday our section was assigned a rush project which had to be done by Tuesday. It would have been done on time without me, but with me it went smoother. Oh, well.

Concerning software for my Amiga, I definitely want a spelling checker. As those of you who read this surely realise, I need one. I would also like a package which can count the words, handy for writing articles and fiction for sale. So far, I don't know of any program which has this.

I am only now gettin used to the feel of the keyboard and starting to pick up typing speed. It is rather soft, without the "click" of the IBM I use at work. I have trouble knowing when the key has printed and often wind up skipping letters. Still, my typing speed is improving with use. I am transferring the novel I have been working on to the Amiga. I have six chapters finished, a seventh about half done and notes for several others.

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MAILING COMMENTS

Cover: It took me three days to get that tune out of my head.

Chair: Our first two month deadline and I miss it. *&%\$&^%R!!!

Me: Where I was talking about the number of people with Class III firearms licenses the remark in parenthesis should have read (thousand?). Actually, there are well over a hundred thousand people with these permits.

Roxanne: Have you been to the annex at the Wright-Patterson museum and seen the YF-12 yet? I know what you mean about data checking being amazingly boring. That is the sort of thing I have been doing in my own job for several years; the only difference is that I am pretty much on my own so any mistakes found are mine. I don't believe in supporting anyone who is capable of supporting themselves. Well, maybe give them basic needs; i.e. dormitory style housing and nutritious but boring food. No money. I have a couple of fannish friends who merged their last names when they married. He spelled it "Parlegrecofiarello" and she spelled it "Parlegreco-Fiarello." Since both versions are longer than the space allotted for last names in most mailing lists they used to get some pretty strangely addressed mail.

Barry: I tried a couple of evenings to see Halley's comet before it rounded the sun with no luck. I was using my 7x50 night glasses, which are pretty good for the money I spent on them; stars and the moon showed up real well, as did the trees, houses and (ouch!) streetlights. Glad you found it. Oh, yeah, at Concave someone brought an eight inch reflector and they had two comet spotting parties. My Doom Patrol article has not been printed. I am expecting it "real soon now."

Bonnie: Like your title, by the way. Re. yr. cmt. Sam Paris, do we really need to read anymore for non-technical jobs? I am definitely in favor of literacy, but is it a necessity or a luxury? I have seen a program for the Amiga which allows you to zoom from Earth orbit down to the registration desk of a hotel. The factor is several million to one. Of course, you can't do this for all points on the map; there isn't enough storage for that on any computer that I know of. The guy, who is the one who got me hooked on the Amiga, is planning to use this in his gaming.

Alice: Sounds like you are approaching a critical mass of Techies. Another person who collects hobbies. The Bermuda Triangle bid got third on my return. Rotating work shifts are very straining on your circadian rythms. What is the reason for this arrangement? I assume the foreshortening in your title is in reference to the foreshortening that happens to physical objects near light speed.

Guy: An interesting end to an interesting experience. I am glad you are back home safe and employed.

Donna: One of these days I am going to make a return visit to Kalamazoo. Unfortunately, I don't like crowds so it will take me a while to steel myself. Meanwhile, your reports bring back fond memories of the one time I did make it. Re. yr. cmt. me: Well, here I am at the end again.

TRANSPORTER TOPICS

ESCAPE ROUTES...

Part One: The Causes

The most likely physical cause of the disaster was the sealing at the joints that hold together the Solid Rocket Boosters. The SRBs are built in large segments, filled with propellant at the Utah facilities of SRB contractor Morton Thiokol, Inc., and shipped by rail to the Kennedy Space Center (one booster is built in four segments since an SRB built as a single unit would be too long to travel by rail). There they are stacked and assembled. The joint between segments relies on an asbestos-filled putty and two elastomer "O"-ring seals to prevent gases from escaping the booster interior (see Fig. 1). Without going into technical details (I recommend to the reader the detailed continuing coverage of the Shuttle investigation in the magazine Aviation Week and Space Technology) it appears that excessive cold—less than 45° F.—can prevent these seals from working properly, which can result in the leak which led to the explosion.

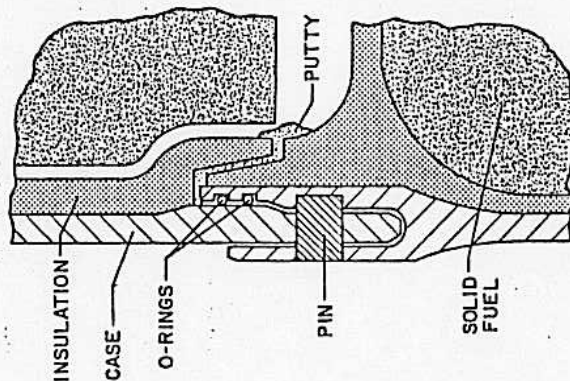


FIG. 1: JOINT DETAIL

Here the bureaucracy begins to rear its ugly head. It was revealed at the hearings of the presidential commission investigating the Challenger disaster that Thiokol and NASA engineers had known since 1982 that seal failure could lead to destruction of the Shuttle, and that the backup seal was in fact unreliable. It was then that the seals were reclassified as a "Criticality One" item, defined as a non-redundant item (not including primary structural elements), the loss of which would lead to the Shuttle's destruction. Such an item requires a special waiver from NASA to be used in the Shuttle system. The primary "O"-ring seal received such a waiver in early 1983. (Just as a side note: there are apparently 829 items in the Shuttle system that have received such waivers—213 on the SRB alone. Think about it.) Since then, NASA and Thiokol have been investigating the seals, and numerous design changes were already under consideration to eliminate the problem. However, they had not yet been implemented.

According to testimony at the hearings, on January 27 (the day before launch) Thiokol engineers, concerned about the seals and the cold weather, urged that Mission 51-L be postponed. Thiokol's representative at Kennedy Space Center, Allen J. McDonald, agreed. However, urged by NASA officials at the Marshall Space Flight Center, McDonald's superiors at Thiokol overruled him, and the official Thiokol statement okayed the launch. The apparent reason: insufficient data indicating that the launch would be unsafe, a startling reversal of the policy of supreme caution which has been characteristic of NASA's public image in the past. Even more start-

Marty: There has been serious talk around here about relieving prison crowding by paroleing non-violent criminals to their homes and maybe community work. They would be kept track of by using the electronic band which is already being tried in other places. Strange, but every account I have read of this credits the Spider-Man newspaper strip with the idea. I first read about it in the novel Bladerunner (not the movie). Is this the first occurrence or can someone find an older reference? Your idea was presaged by a subplot over the last couple of years in the Legion of Super Heroes comic book. One long running character with a silly power was gotten rid of by being drafted into politics on his home planet. He wound up president. Maybe Halley will be better the next time around. Any of you astronomers out there know how it is supposed to look next showing? The Amiga got a bad rep in large part because someone at Commodore got the bright idea of loaning out pre-production machines and software to certain people for publicity purposes. The version of "Arcticfox" I have seen is pretty slick. The plot is typical arcade game but the mechanics are inventive and the graphics nice. I particularly like the TV guided missile. You can set it on autopilot and watch it's progress on a secondary "screen" or switch the output from the missile to the main "screen" and pilot it yourself. About job changes, see above.

Well, that about does it for original material for this issue. I am pressed for time. I hope to have copies of an article which appeared in Claustrophobia somewhere in here. It really puts a bad light on descisions made by NASA management on the Shuttle.

One last thing about the Amiga; because it can multi-task I can run the clock while typing this. By setting the alarm I avoid the risk of working too late at the keyboard because the computer will beep and flash at a set time. Nice.

ling: this entire debate--on a critically one system--took place at a launch decision-making level known as Level 3. According to other testimony from higher NASA officials, word of this controversy never reached as high as Level 2, much less Level 1 or the astronauts themselves. The Challenger flew--and was destroyed.

The hearings continue, and the question of the seals is not yet fully answered. However, in tracking this one item down, the commission is overlooking the larger picture. The Challenger disaster stemmed not just from misguided decisions made the day before the flight, but from misguided decisions made years ago.

As the Shuttle is currently designed, there is no abort mode for the first two minutes of flight while the Solid Rocket Boosters are burning. Should the orbiter attempt to disconnect from the external tank and free while the SRBs are applying thrust, the orbiter would pivot sharply backwards at its rear connection to the external tank and rip itself apart. And, there is no way that the current SRBs can be shut down once they have been ignited. Ejection seats at the speeds and altitudes of the latter portion of the SRB burn are useless. Two minutes--with the astronauts at the mercy of a system containing 213 critically one items.

It is inconceivable that any competent designer of an aerospace flight system would create a vehicle which lacked the capability for safe abort during the most critical part of a launch. Aircraft have designed into them the capability to survive multiple failures during all portions of the flight regime; it is called intact abort. Loss of power to an engine or to one of the hydraulic systems are some of the contingencies the designer must face and deal with to the satisfaction of his company management, the airplane buyer, and the FAA or the USAF. When a mistake is made, such as the infamous DC-10 problem involving the loss of all hydraulic power (due to damage of the leading edge hydraulic lines when the port engine separated from the wing), there is justifiable outrage. Airplane buyers and the traveling public avoid the plane with the problem until that problem is resolved. We do not have that luxury with the Shuttle, largely due to NASA's monopoly status, enforced by the space agency's pressure on competing American launch systems (more on this in Part Two of this article).

The first decision failure for the government space program was the initial choice of solid rocket boosters for the Shuttle--not so much for the safety issues, but because of the terrible design impacts which helped make the Shuttle a non-starter to begin with. Solids have their place (for example on military weapons which need instant response) but are not, in the opinion of many designers, suited for a reusable role. Difficult to reload and handle, loaded with expensive propellant, difficult to throttle, they force space vehicle designers to extremes which were known to be unnecessary.

The usual argument for the SRBs is that Congress would not appropriate, nor the President ask for, sufficient funds to build a two-staged, fully reusable Shuttle. But before a two-staged design was considered, a stage-and-one-half design called "Starclippers," proposed by Lockheed Missiles and Space Co., was suggested. With an expendable drop tank for the bulk of its liquid oxygen and hydrogen propellants, but no onboard boosters (solid or otherwise), the Starclipper was both technologically feasible and would have been reasonably economical to operate. However, for reasons which are somewhat obscure, the NASA administrator of the time, James Fletcher (who is likely to be NASA administrator again soon) and Shuttle designer Max Faget (now President of Space Industries, Inc.) chose the solid booster route.

Even so, competent designers could still have managed to meet NASA's requirement (at the time of the Phase C/D Shuttle contract award) that the system employ solid-fueled boosters and do so without compromising safety. In the contract proposal made by Aerojet Solid Propulsion Co. in 1973, Aerojet proposed that the Shuttle SRB be manufactured in a single unit, rather than being assembled from segments. To avoid the rail travel problem mentioned earlier, Aerojet would have processed and filled the boosters at a plant in Dade County, Florida, and shipped them to the Kennedy Space Center by barge. In this way, safety would be improved by eliminating the seal problem altogether. However, Aerojet did not get the contract and Thokol did, even though Thokol's proposal was ranked last out of four competing bids. Why? Officials involved claimed that Thokol's bid was lowest. The fact that the chairman of the Senate budget committee in control of NASA's budget was Senator Frank Moss from Utah, or the fact that James Fletcher was an ex-president of the University of Utah and his wife was from Brigham City, Utah (Thokol's hometown) doubtless had little to do with the decision.

ESCAPE ROUTES...

Still, seals or no seals, it is possible to go even further to make SRB safe. This is clearly shown in at least one of the Space Shuttle proposals done at that time: the McDonnell Douglas (MDAC)/TRW Report No. ED600, dated May 12, 1972 (in response to NASA RFP No. 9-BE421-67-40P).

Abort considerations drove the MDAC Shuttle proposal. At every point during the flight, even stationary on the pad, the MDAC Shuttle had abort options for the crew and the orbiter (these options are detailed in Figure 2). This abort capability was possible due primarily to a small solid propellant abort rocket positioned between the three SSME orbiter engines (Figure 3).

This clever abort system was dual functional: used in an abort situation to get the orbiter away from the stack, the abort motor was also fired (and then jettisoned) during a normal flight after it was no longer needed for abort purposes. This added about 100 feet per second to the Shuttle's velocity, so the system was not just dead weight.

The Mode 1 abort illustrated in Figure 4 was intended for altitudes between 20,000 and 60,000 ft. Note that the illustration shows a time frame about two seconds before the actual Challenger explosion.

But, you argue, NASA has said that there was no way to determine during the Challenger flight that the right solid booster was failing. As mentioned earlier, no one was aware of danger as the deadly plume burned for at least thirteen seconds before the explosion. So even with an abort rocket, the Challenger and its crew would have been finished.

With the Shuttle NASA built, true. With the one MDAC proposal, no. MDAC engineers knew that a failure of the SRB would be catastrophic. For that reason they studied the possible failures of the SRB. These are listed in the table in Figure 5 and include ignition problems, case burn-throughs, nozzle burn-throughs (which almost occurred during an early Shuttle mission), premature separation of one or both SRBs, and most ironically, "O"-ring seal leakage.

MDAC proposed a burn-through wire sensor to determine if the "O"-ring was leaking. If it was, their SRB could be "thrust-neutralized" by firing a pyrotechnic charge which would open a vent at the top of the motors, dropping the chamber pressure drastically and providing a second port for gas to escape to offset the thrust from the main nozzle. This idea was a requirement, successfully tested, for the highly reliable United Technologies/Chemical Systems Division UA 1207 7-segment solid-fueled motor intended for use on the USAF Manned Orbiting Laboratory Titan booster (later cancelled). With the boosters' thrust cancelled, the orbiter can safely drop away from boosters and external tank. If the Shuttle is too low, the abort motor would fire, propelling the orbiter away from danger at an acceleration of 3 g's.

These safety features could have been incorporated into the Shuttle boosters at a minuscule cost. With the SRB shutdown system and the orbiter abort motor, the first two minutes of a Shuttle flight would no longer be deadly. Had these systems been incorporated into the Shuttle's final design, the men and women aboard the Challenger might have emerged on the Kennedy Space Center runway, shaken but unharmed, rather than being precipitated in shreds into the Atlantic.

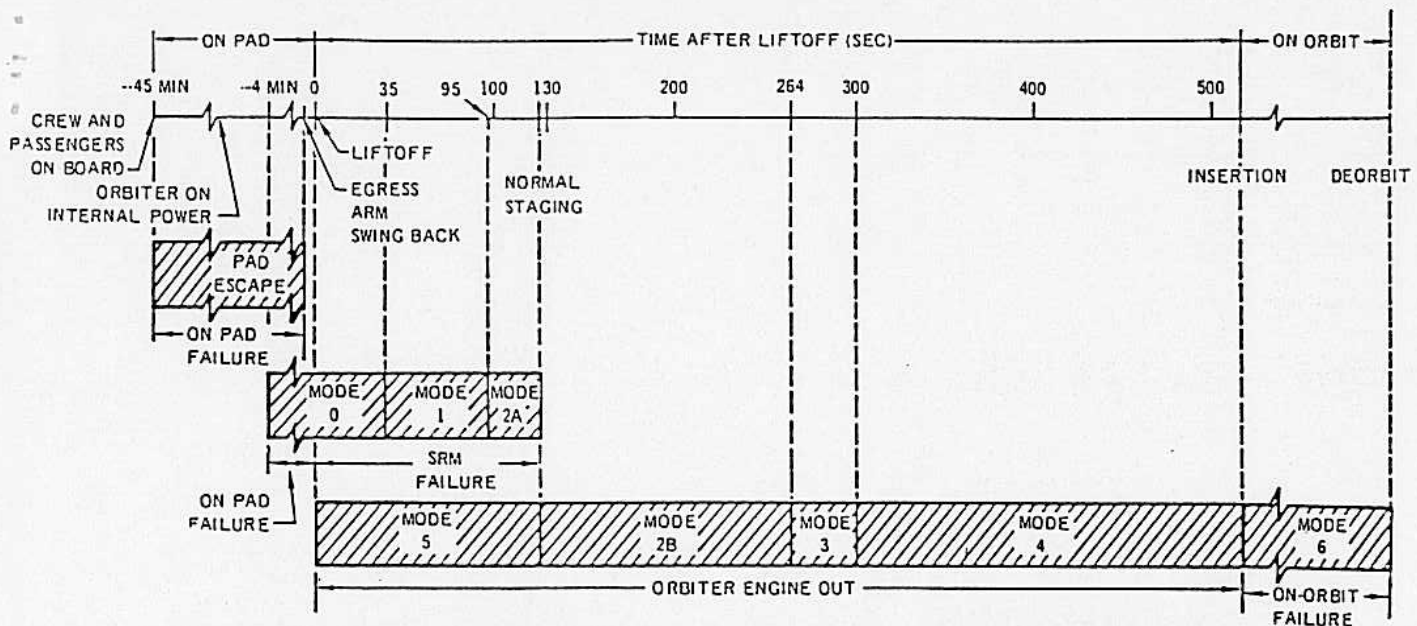
Why these safety systems were discarded is a question to which we have not been able to find a specific answer. Their weight was minimal, as was their cost. The question that the Congress, the President's commission, and the news media should be asking as they investigate the causes of the Challenger's destruction is not should the launch have taken place, but rather who approved the design which gave the orbiter and the crew no chance at all during the first two minutes of flight?

Next Month: Part Two--The Consequences

Until next time,

FIG. 2
ABORT CAPABILITY

Easterly Mission



ABORT MODE	DESCRIPTION	ABORT MODE	DESCRIPTION
PAD ESCAPE	EMERGENCY EGRESS TO TOWER PLATFORM AND GROUND SHELTER (2 MINUTES) USING ELEVATOR OR SLIDEWIRES	2B	SAME AS 2 EXCEPT SRMS HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY STAGED.
0	SHUTDOWN SSME, THRUST NEUTRALIZE SRMS, SEPARATE ORBITER FROM TANK, FIRE ABORT ROCKET, GLIDE TO LANDING.	3	USE 109% EPL, BURN OMS ENGINES IN PARALLEL WITH SSME, INSERT INTO ONCE AROUND ORBIT, SEPARATE AND DEORBIT TANK, ENTER AND GLIDE TO LANDING.
1	SHUTDOWN SSME, THRUST NEUTRALIZE SRMS, JETTISON ABORT ROCKET, SEPARATE ORBITER FROM TANK, GLIDE TO LANDING	4	USE 109% EPL, BURN OMS DOWN TO 350 FPS, INSERT INTO 50 x 100 NMI ORBIT, CIRCULARIZE AT 100 x 100 NMI ORBIT, STAY ON ORBIT, NORMAL DEORBIT, ENTRY AND LANDING.
2A	USE 109% EPL, THRUST NEUTRALIZE AND SEPARATE SRMS, MANEUVER TOWARD LANDING SITE, SHUT DOWN SSME, SEPARATE TANK, GLIDE TO LANDING.	5	USE 109% EPL, STEER TO SRM BURNOUT, SEPARATE SRMS, CONTINUE IN MODE 2 ABORT.
		6	DEORBIT AND RETURN TO LANDING SITE AT FIRST OPPORTUNITY.

ABORT TRAJECTORIES

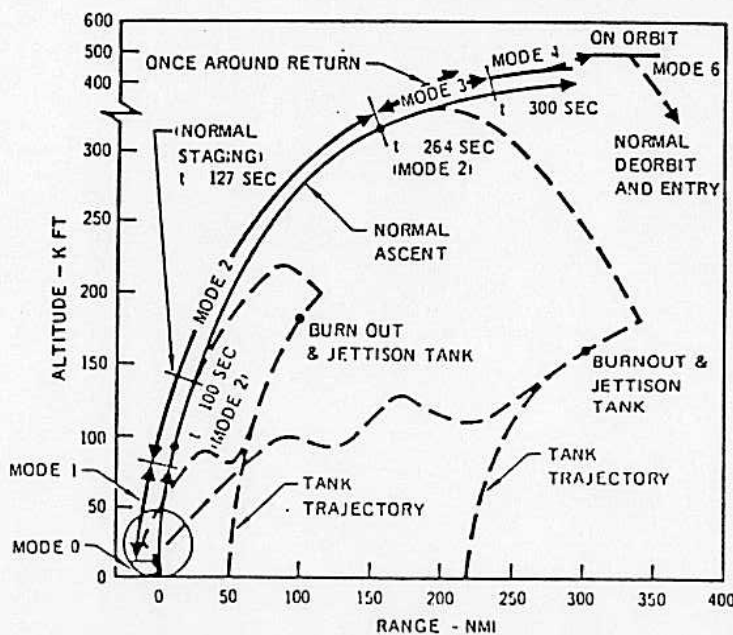


FIG 4: MODE 1 ABORT TRAJECTORY

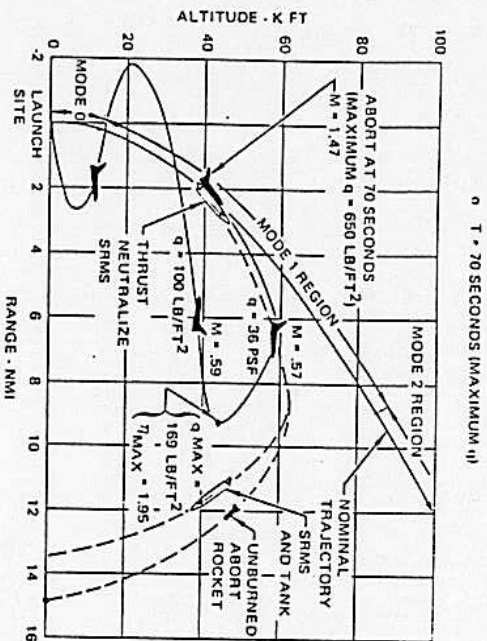
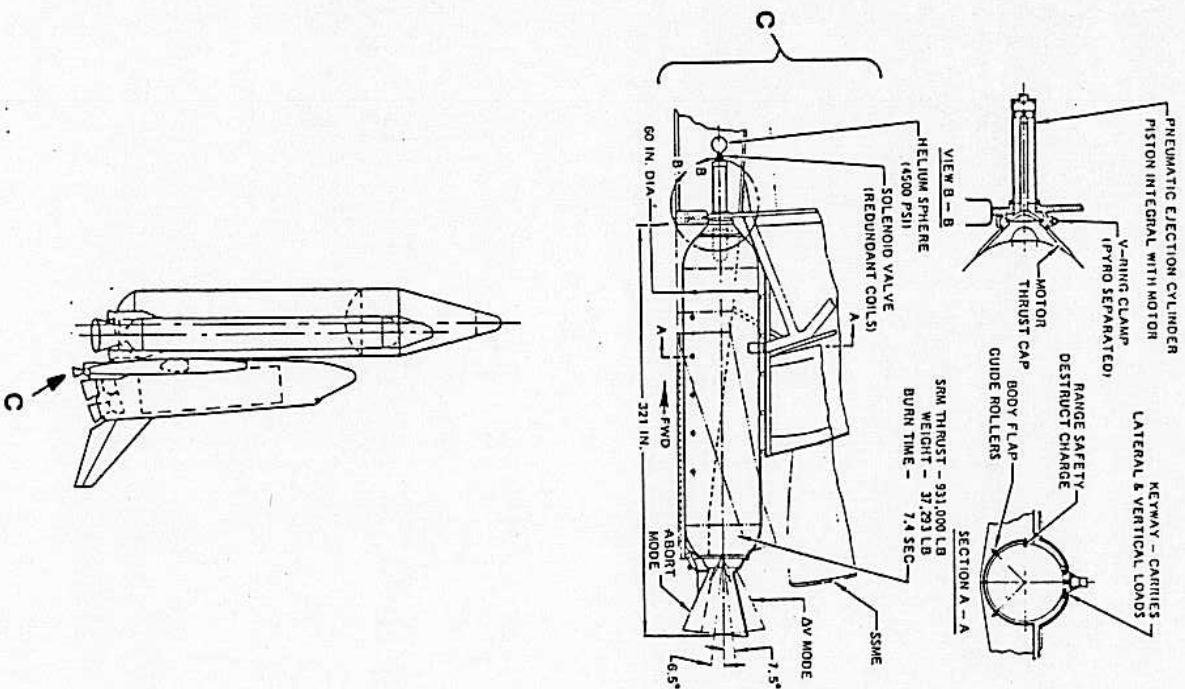


FIG 5: SRM MALFUNCTION DETECTION FOR SAFETY

FAILURE MODE	CAUSE	DETECTION METHODS	PREVENTIVE MEASURES	CONSEQUENT ACTIONS
NO IGNITION	• LOSS OF IGN. SIGNAL • IGNITER MISFIRE	• CHAMBER PRESSURE • NOZZLE EXIT BURN TIME	• REDUNDANT IGN. SYSTEMS • MONITORING UNTIL THRUST BUILDUP	• PAD HOLD DOWN
SOLE BURN THROUGH	• CORROSION/CRACK • INSULATION DEFECT	• CHAMBER PRESSURE	• NOISE INSPECTION IS RAY • ULTRASONICS • LUBRICANT INSULATION • DESIGN MARKING	• INITIATE AND ABORT ORBITER
NOZZLE BURN THROUGH	• INSULATION ON BONDING • FAILURE	• GUIDANCE MEASUREMENTS	• NOISE INSPECTION • LUBRICANT INSULATION • DESIGN MARKING	• INITIATE THE ABORT ORBITER
TELEFMS LEAKAGE	• SEAL FAILURE AT JOINTS • ON NOZZLE JOINTS	• BURN THROUGH TIME • CHAMBER PRESSURE	• REDUNDANT SEALS • LOW PRESSURE LEAK CHECK	• INITIATE THE ABORT ORBITER
PRELIMINARY SEPARATION	• ATTACHMENT FAILURE • PRELIMINARY SIGNAL	• BREAK TIME	• ADEQUATE DESIGN MARKING • ELECTRICAL INTERLOCKS	• TIME OF RELEASING ORBITER

FIG 3: ORBITER ABORT SRM INSTALLATION



INCORRECT THOUGHTS

A 'zine for Apa-Tech by
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MAILING COMMENTS

Usually, I do these last. This time I'll do them first. Guess I'm just that kind of guy. Impetuous. Impulsive.

STEVE Funny cover

ROD Symphony is basically for 1-2-3 junkies needing a bigger fix. // While we were in Australia, fell weapons and explosives of all kinds were readily available at the Army surplus stores, including stuff like crossbows and machine pistols. Even with the friendly neighborhood arsenals, they don't have the problem there we do here with urban violence.

ROXANNE Ain't nothing wrong with Dayton. Nice berserker, too. // Re yr Controversial Comment: A recent trip back to MSU, my Alma Mater, seems to me to indicate that most students, including Liberal Arts majors, are fairly conservative, pragmatic, and materialistic nowadays. The effect was like I always imagined college in the 50's: ivy-covered buildings, kids wearing chinos and carrying books, etc. This makes me think that what happens in national politics in the next few years will determine how students think and act. Having seen the campus reactions to upheavals in Central America, South Africa, and the Middle East, I think there's enormous potential for political activism if students are (once again) asked to fight in an unpopular war. But as long as times stay relatively good, I think things will remain as they are.

BARRY Did you see the same comet I did? The treacherous False Snout has been known to drive men (and women too, though not as many) mad with strange visions. // No, I didn't: I just hunkered down at the municipal feeding troughs scattered throughout Australia, face first. It's good to visit a welfare state.

BONNIE Nice map. // Despite the often crummy selections, there are good movies at the local video rental place. I recommend The Psychotronic Movie Book, available from Greg Ketter at most 'cons, as an invaluable buyer's guide to those Friday night B-movie sf and horror "features". A recent find: for years, Steve has been showing a trailer for Shogun Assassin, a Japanese martial-arts import with a droning electronic soundtrack by Mark Lindsay of Paul Revere and the Raiders. (This is the one where the knives pop out of the baby carriage... need I say more?) Well, we finally rented it. Folks, it's not to be missed. On the gentler side, I recommend the movie Comfort and Joy, a British-made sleeper that suffered a limited release here in the U.S. My problem has always been figuring out how to work the VCR.

ALICE Welcome aboard.

DONNA You should read The Eudeamonic Pie for ideas on how to float seemingly "impractical" schemes and keep everybody involved happy. // I like the new Pyro, too. // Some of our neighbors I don't want to know very well. // Re yr ct Bonnie: I dunno, I think you can still have a "childlike sense of wonder" and be respectable. There are guys asleep in the park every morning who have neither.

GUY An amazing tale. Good luck here in the States. // At MSU, I was lucky enough to attend a residential college (Lyman Briggs) within the main campus. Being only around 1500 students in size, it was nice to attend a freshman chem course with 30 people instead of 500. All our instructors had offices in the same hall, too, so you could drop in on them at any time. It was a lot more fun and challenging than the Engineering College grind I went through my last two years there... I think you are on the right track.

OTHER NEWS FROM KALAMAZOO

Spring has turned into summer in true Midwest off-on fashion: from cold and rainy to hot and muggy (like tonight) in a few weeks. I'm sure Roxanne will write about the Berserker at the Dayton Hamfest. Like everyone else, I had a great time there. Thanks again to both Roxanne and Scott for having us over. Sorry about the cigarette burns.

In true suburban fashion we have planted flower beds in front of the house, including a brick border. Now we need pink flamingoes or a chrome ball to make our little domestic scene complete. I once passed a house that, instead of the usual pastoral deer or wagon wheel, had a leering dinosaur with blood-dripping jaws in front of it. I thought then that I would've liked to meet those people. With the motor running, of course.

Back in May my mother, sister, and I took a week off from our respective jobs and went down to Florida. We visited Epcot Center (which is very nice, an amusement park for grown-ups), Disneyworld, Kennedy Space Center, and Cypress Gardens. I found Kennedy Space Center to be absolutely nothing like I expected: in reality, it's a bunch of rusting gantries and concrete blockhouses out in the middle of nowhere. We were there the week after the Delta blew up, so parts of the Center were closed and many of the tours canceled. A definite highlight of our visit there was the Imax movie "The Dream is Alive", which is about the shuttle program. Despite eerie scenes of Judy Resnick and Dick Scobee performing experiments (they began the movie with a special dedication to the Challenger crew) the movie is a thrilling, unforgettable, inspiring experience. Having seen liftoff on that giant screen, I now know a little of what it must be like... and I also know I'd be too scared shitless to ever get aboard one of those things.

Most of the rest of Florida consisted of 'gator farms, souvenir shops, and water ski shows.

A few weeks ago all of us here in Kalamazoo received mysterious party invitations for May 25th in the mail. They featured letters cut out of a magazine inviting us to the "event of a lifetime", but not telling us where or when. A few days later, maps arrived with a poem telling us where to find the party and when to arrive. Sneaky phone calls and a process of elimination identified the likely party-giver as Parr. Sure enough, on May 25th Parr had a birthday picnic in Milham Park. Along with the usual cookout, he brought along several Italian-made toy guns that shot little yellow rubber bullets, as well as motorized squirt guns. We all spent a happy Memorial Day playing frisbee and shooting each other.

What's happening with Space lately? While on vacation I was struck by how much of our space program, despite its civilian veneer, is quasi-military in structure. Most of the rockets and missiles on display at the Kennedy Space Center were built first to carry warheads, and only later used to launch weather and communications satellites. I understand that the recent failures of the Titan III and Delta rockets leaves us dangerously low on surveillance satellites, and the military is now making ominous statements about pre-empting civilian shuttle missions to carry "vital" military payloads instead.

In Science Fiction Chronicle a few months back Frederick Pohl wrote an editorial on the Challenger disaster. He said then, in effect, that supporting the space shuttle was equivalent to supporting the militarization of space and the arms race, since the DoD was the prime beneficiary of the shuttle program. At first I dismissed this argument. But, after thinking about it, and following the Challenger investigation, I began to see his point. Does anybody else in Apaland feel the same way about the Space Program, a canon of the Techie Faith?

Well, that's enough for now. Sorry I couldn't see you all for the pseudo-Memorial Day picnic, but maybe I'll catch some of you here June 15th for Renee's birthday and some of you in Atlanta for Worldcon. Until then...

Mary